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Bhagwan Shantinath

An Incarnation of Peace



Glorious Story Of Our Sixteenth Tirthankar

BHAGWAN SHANTINATH—AN INCARNATION OF PEACE

Just as Vaidik literature describes series of 24 births, Jain literature also has descriptions of a series of 24 Tirthankars. In this sacred series, 16th Tirthankar was Bhagwan Shantinath.

Bhagwan Shantinath was King Meghrath in one of his previous births when he demonstrated his compassion by offering his own flesh for saving the life of a pigeon who had come to him for protection. His sacrifice is a shining example of compassionate Indian culture. In Vaidik series also, a similar story is famous for King Shivi.

Bhagwan Shantinath was born in Hastinapur, the capital of Ikshvaku clan of kings. At the time of his birth, the whole country was attacked by an epidemic which got settled after his mother Achiradevi chanted Shanti Stotra. During his life, his kingdom was never affected by any calamity. That's why he became popular as the incarnation of peace (Shanti). He became the fifth Chakravarti Samrat and then after renouncing his kingdom became the sixteenth Tirthankar.

He became popular as Incarnation of Peace during the time of Bhagwan Mahavir only. The proof of this lies in a statement by Bhagwan Mahavir "Santi Santikare Loe" meaning—Shantinath will establish peace in the world.

Today also, Shantinath is respected and worshipped by whole Jain society as the incarnation of peace. Whenever there is a natural calamity like epidemic, fear, fire etc. the devotees collectively chant Shanti Mantra to tackle them. They pray to and worship Shantinath and feel the miracle by which the calamity recedes.

In this picture story, the short narration of Bhagwan Shantinath's various births is prepared by Sadhvi Dr. Vidyut Prabhashri based on Trishashti Shalaka Purush Charitra by Hemchandracharya etc.

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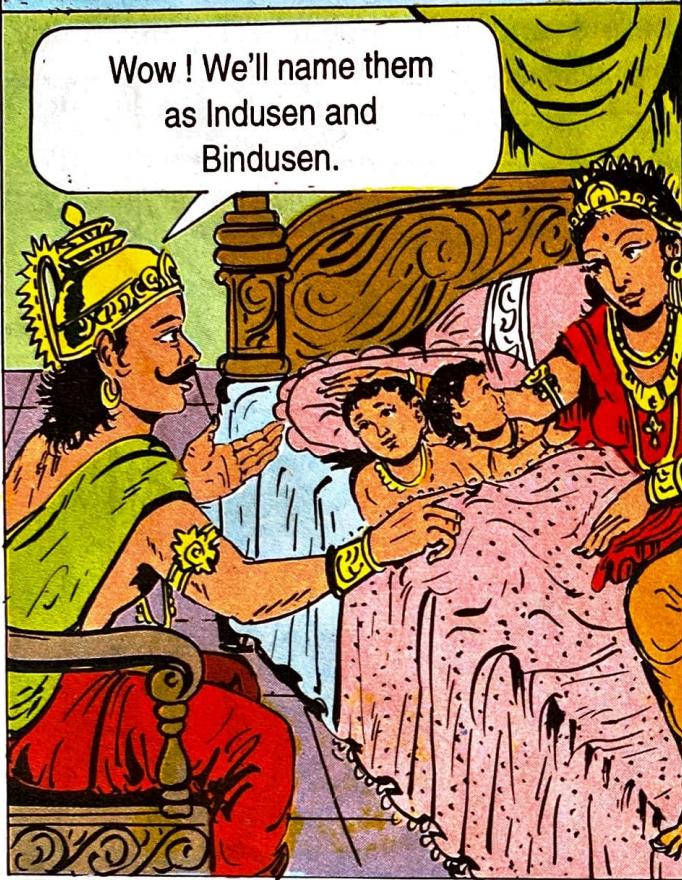
BHAGWAN SHANTINATH AN INCARNATION OF PEACE

This story begins much before Bhagwan Shantinath took birth as a 'Tirthankar'. He took births as Shrisen, Meghrath etc. many brave emperors and later became Tirthankar by practicing severe penance.



Shrisen was a renowned king of Ratnapur kingdom. He was very religious, great donor and benevolent. The king had two beautiful and nice queens Abhinandita and Shikhanandita. Abhinandita was loved by everyone because of her good nature.

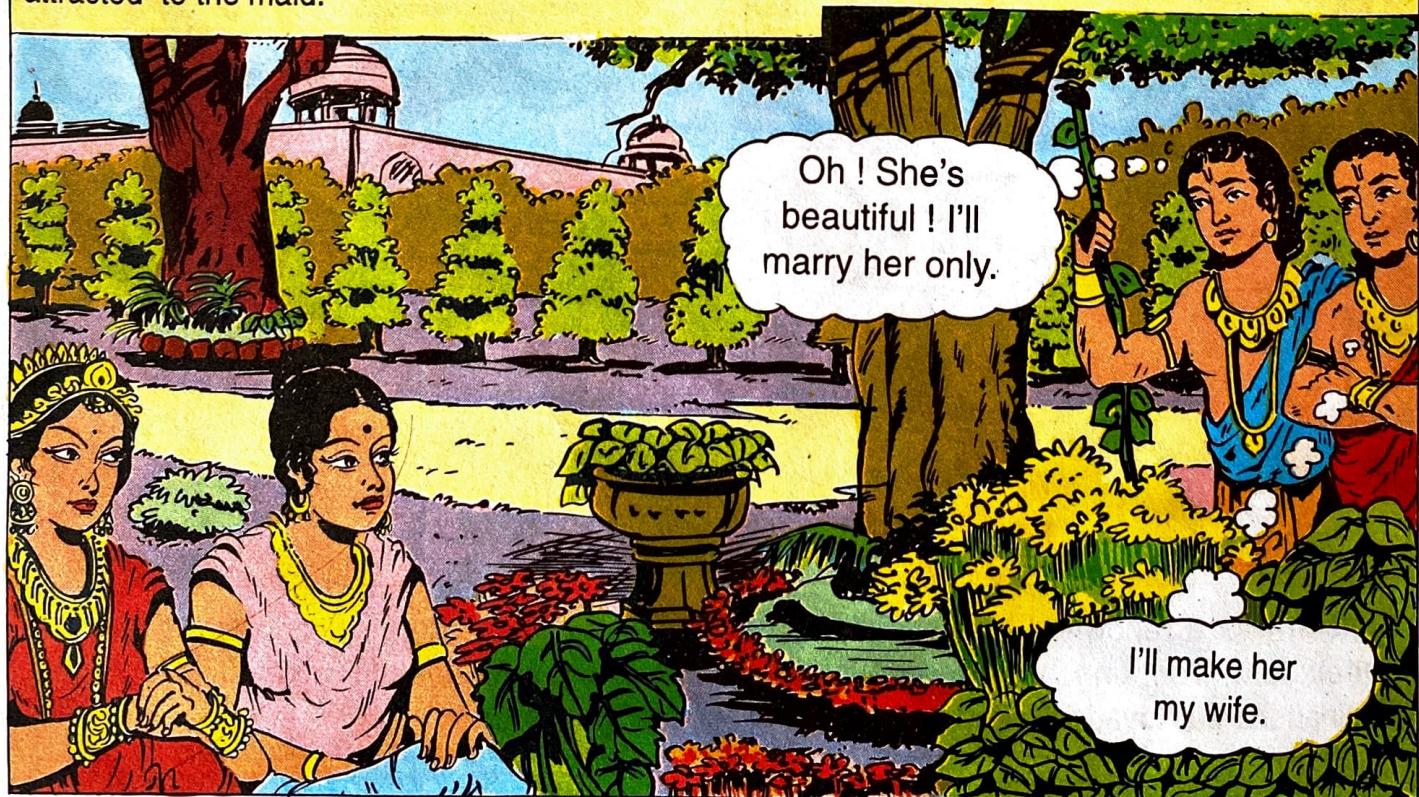
After some time, Queen Abhinandita gave birth to attractive twin sons.



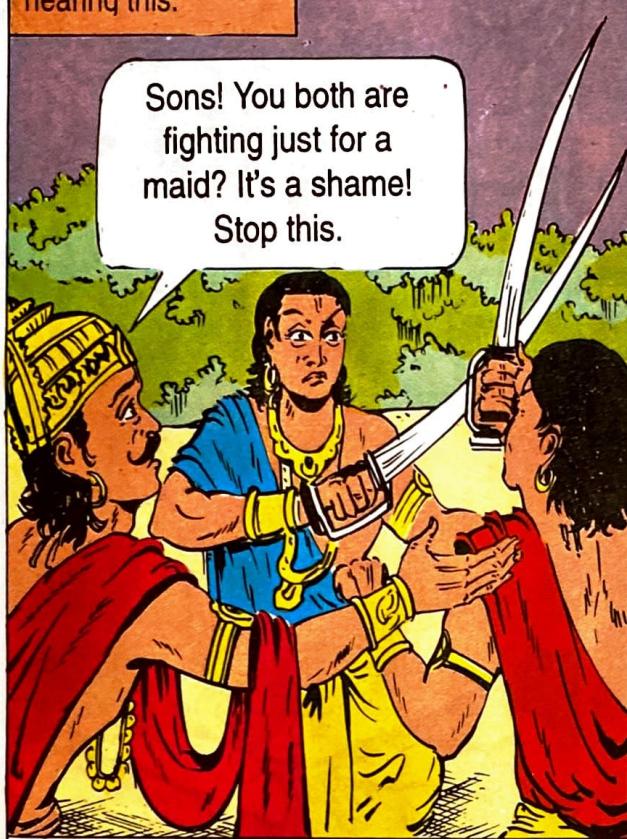
At the age of seven, both the princes were sent to Gurukul for their training and education.



When King Bal of Kaushambi heard about them, he thought of marrying his daughter to Indusen and sent the princess to Ratnapur. She was accompanied by a beautiful maid. Both the brothers got attracted to the maid.

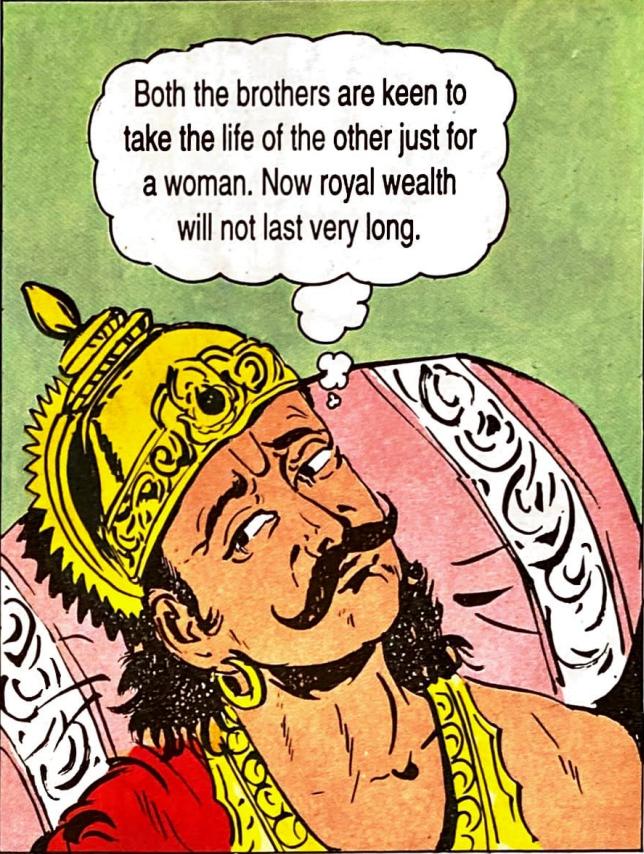


Both the brothers fought for the maid and took out their swords. King Shrisen rushed there on hearing this.



Sons! You both are fighting just for a maid? It's a shame! Stop this.

But King's efforts went in vain. Sad King returned to his room.

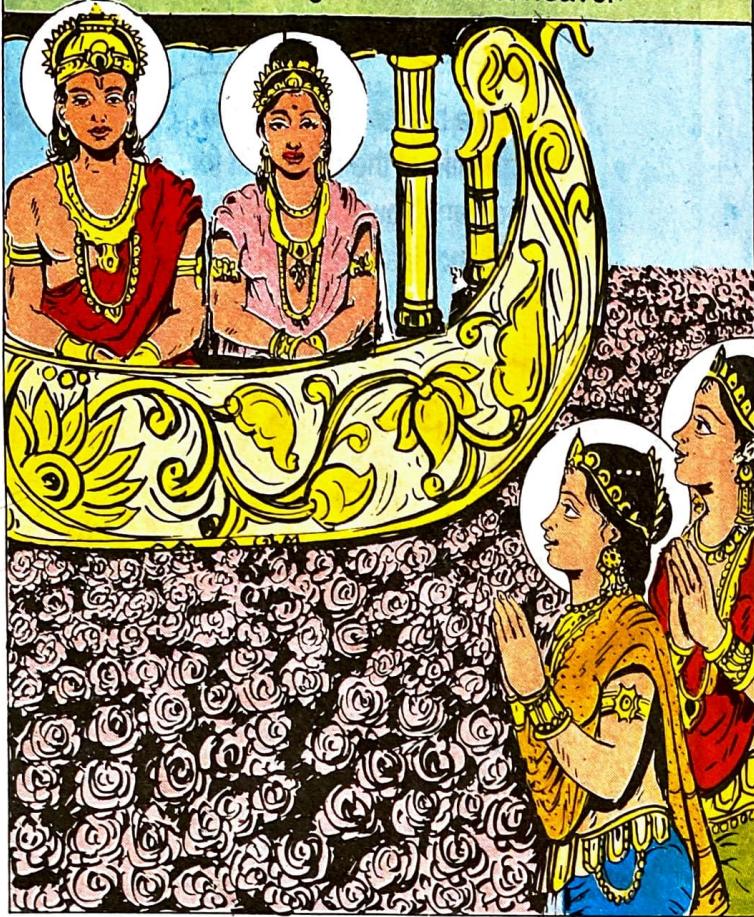


Disappointed and shocked King left this world. Both the queens also died with the sorrow of their husband's death.



King Shrisen and Queen Abhinandita took rebirth in North Kurukshetra as husband and wife.

Completing a simple and peaceful living, Shrisen and Abhinandita became gods in the first heaven



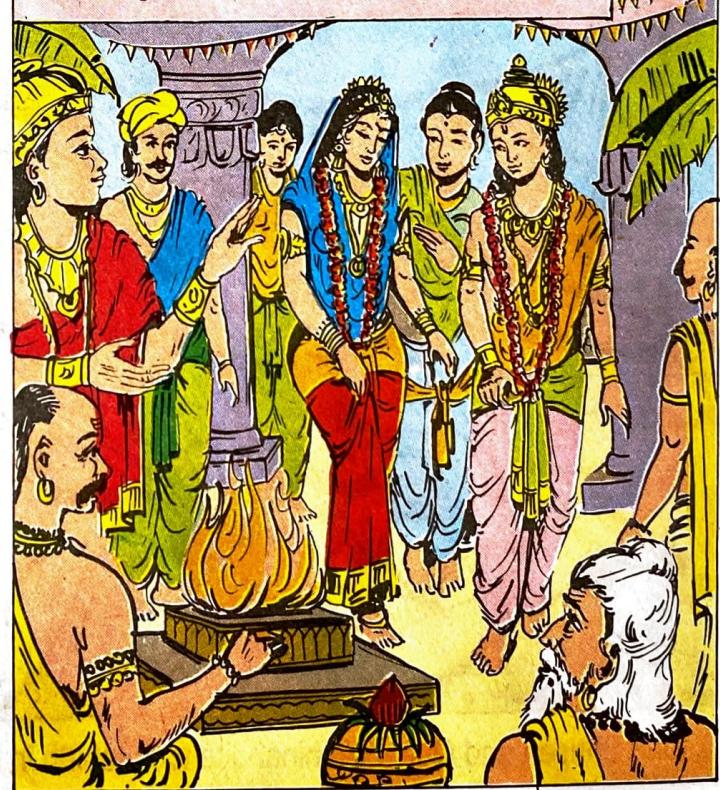
After that, Shrisen's soul became Vidyadhar King Amittej in Vaitadhy mountains.



And Abhinandita's soul took birth as a king named Shrivijay.



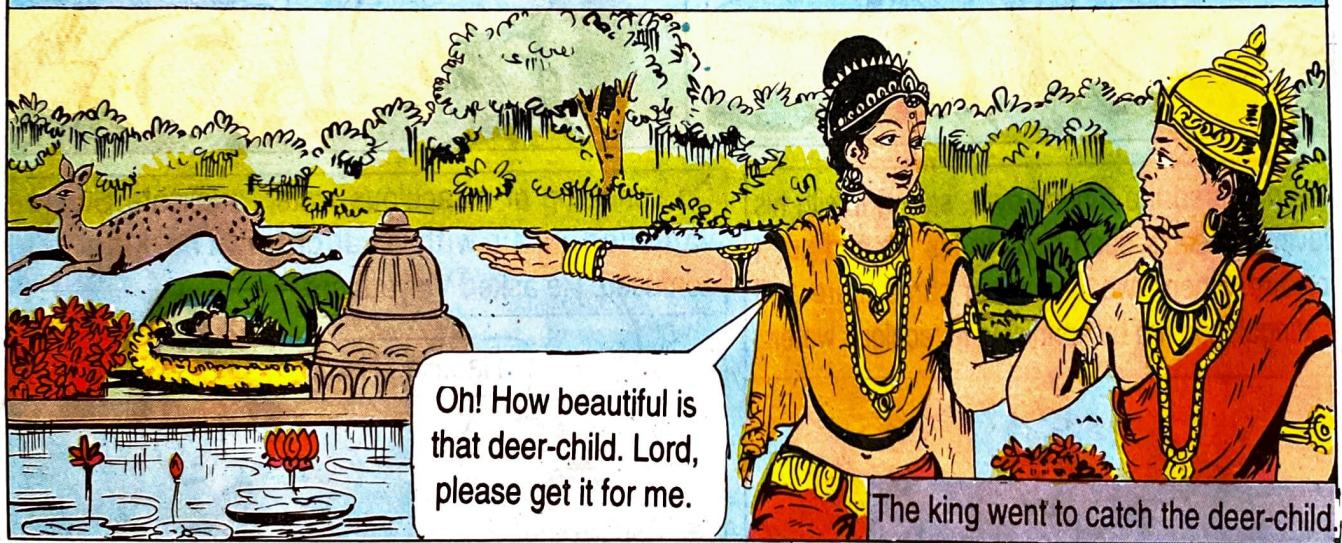
King Amittej had a younger sister named Sutara. He loved her very much. He got Sutara married with King Shrivijay.



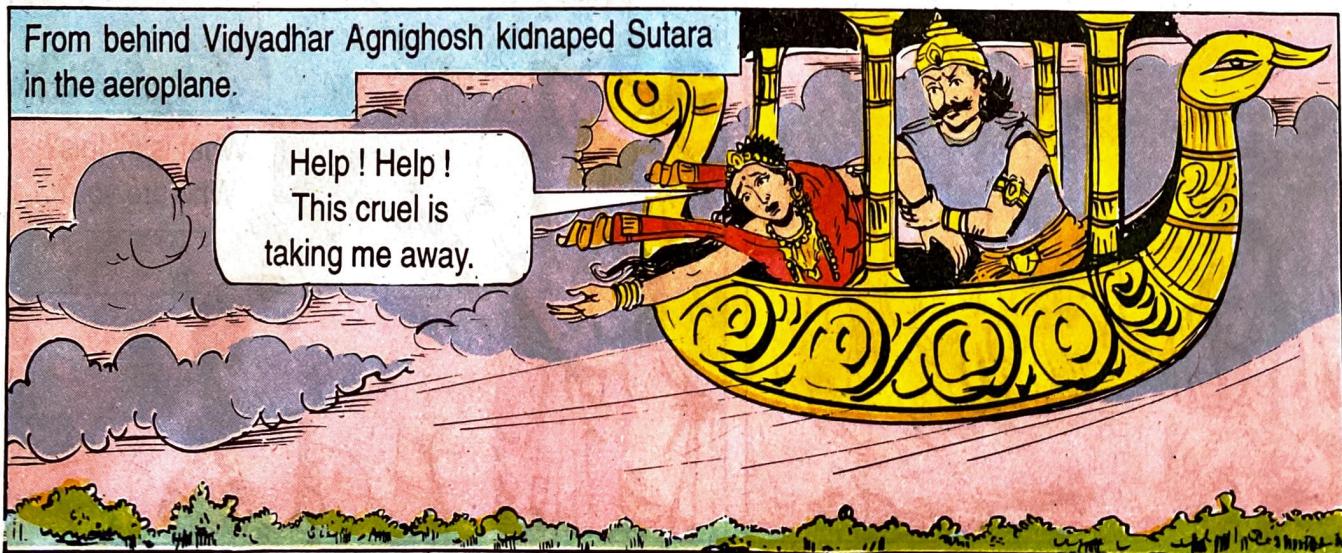
Once King Shrivijay was strolling in the garden with Queen Sutara. A Vidyadhar named Agnighosh passing from there in an aeroplane, got attracted to Sutara on seeing her.



Vidyadhar took the form of a beautiful deer-child and passed from near the queen, jumping.

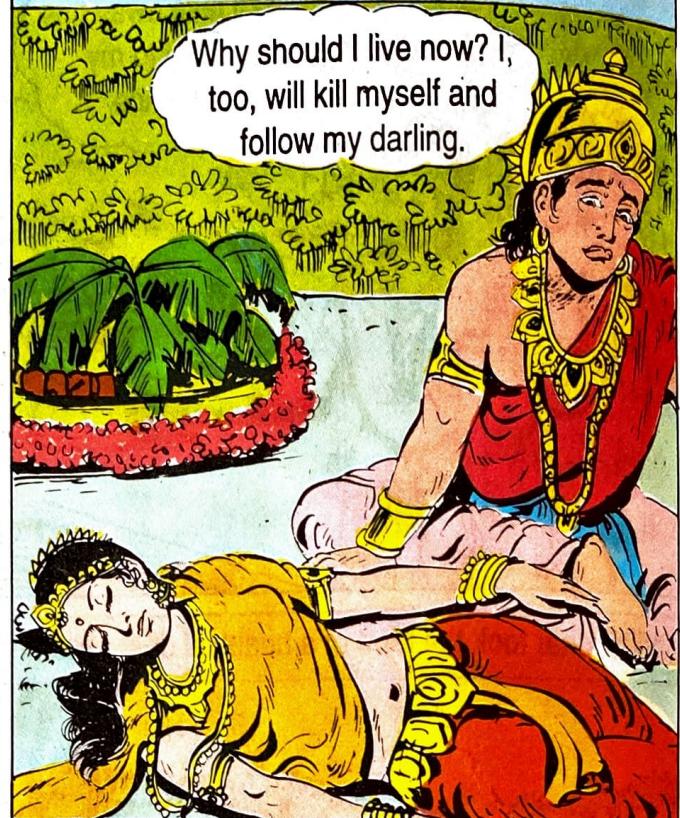
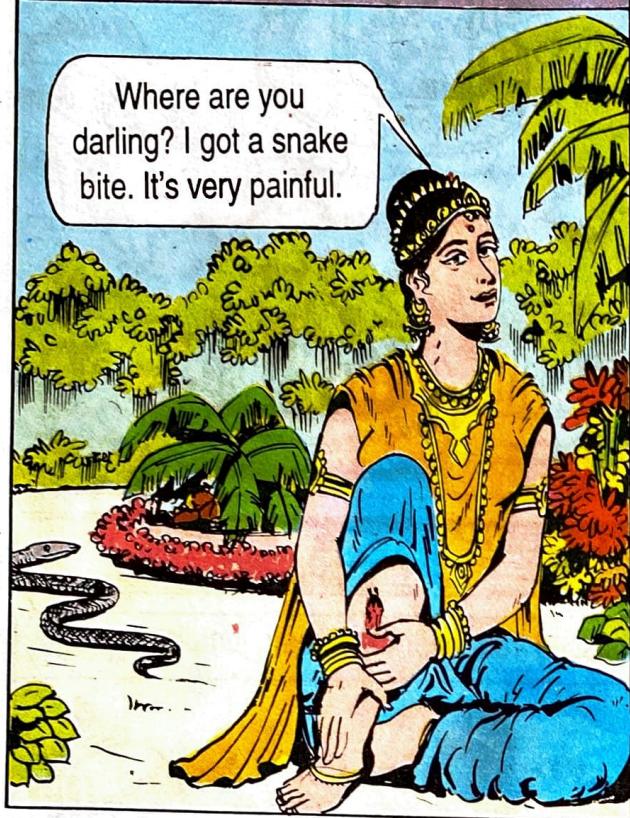


From behind Vidyadhar Agnighosh kidnaped Sutara in the aeroplane.



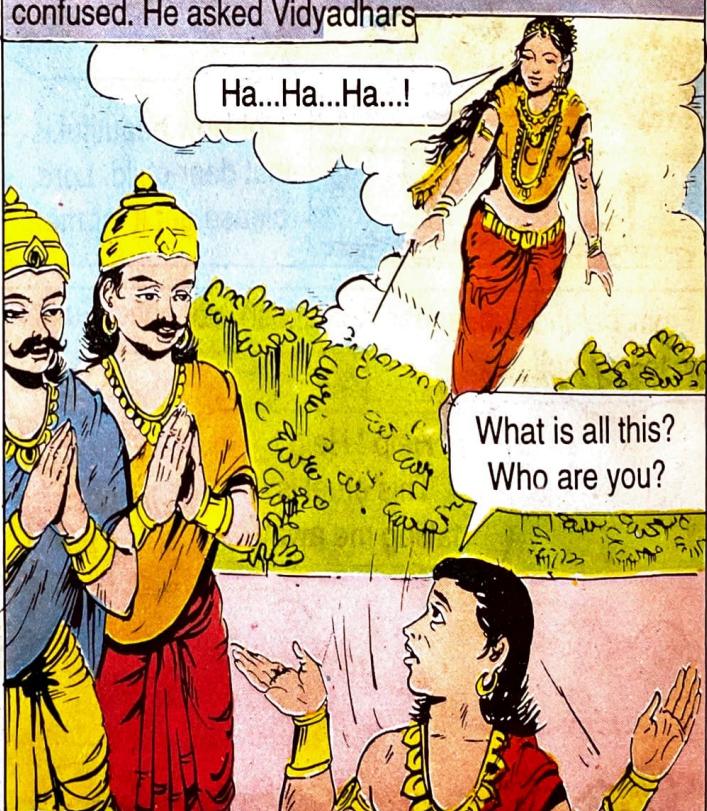
Here, to misguide King Shrivijay, Vidyadhar took the form of Sutara with the help of his magical power and called Shrivijay—

On hearing Queen's voice, Shrivijay rushed there and was shocked to see her dead.

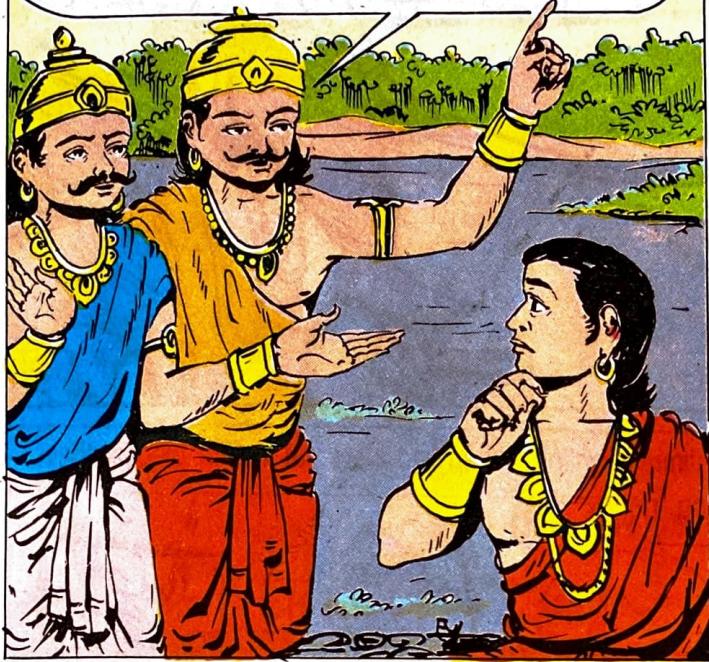


He prepared the funeral-pyre, sat on it with his loving Queen's dead body in his lap and put it on fire. Then, two Vidyadhar came there and extinguished fire by sprinkling miraculous water.

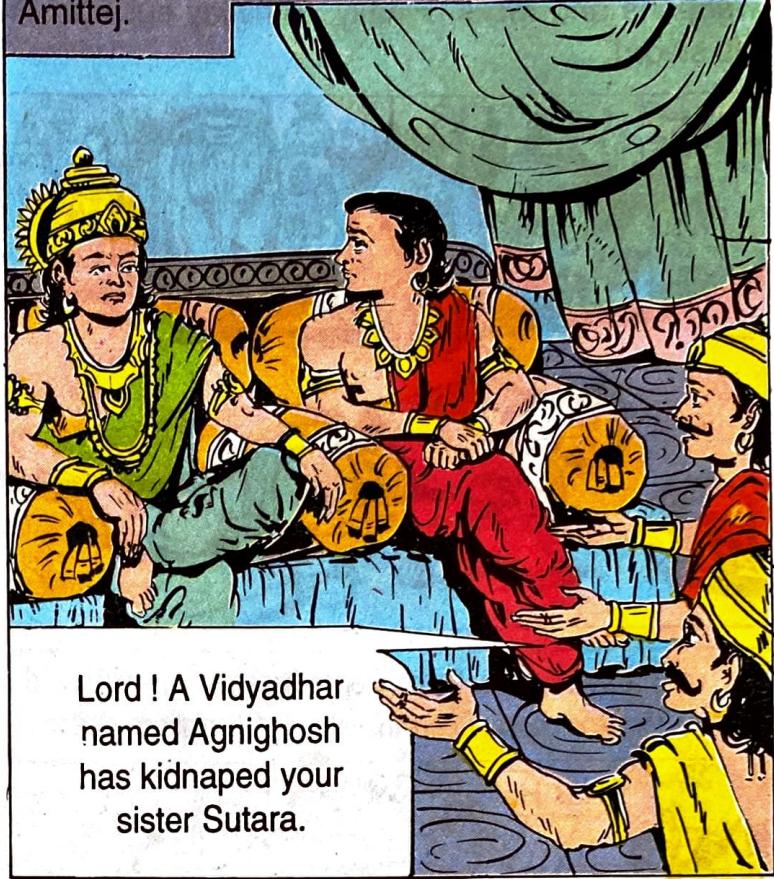
On sprinkling of miraculous water, duplicate Sutara vanished in air with a laughter. The king got confused. He asked Vidyadhars,



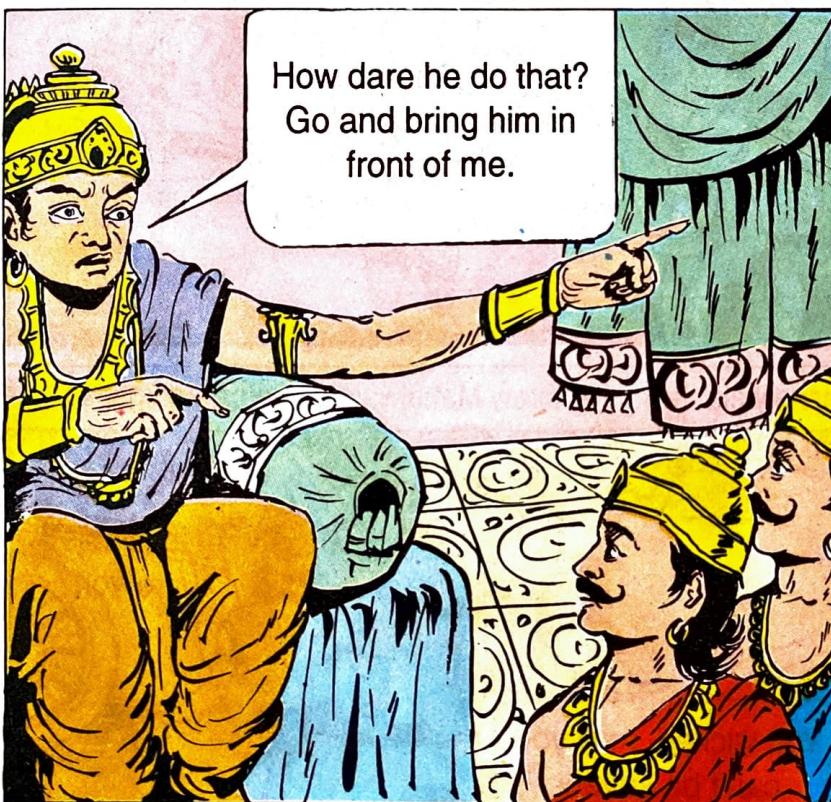
We are assistants of King Amittej. On seeing you burning yourself, we came to save you. Your wife is kidnaped by a Vidyadhar named Agnighosh and this lady is not your wife, but an illusion created by him.



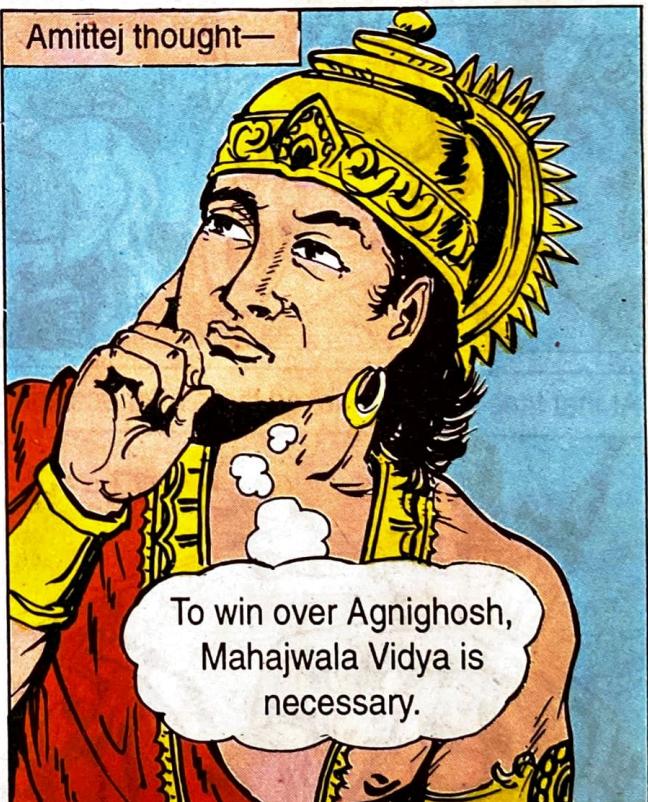
Both the Vidyadhars took Shrivijay to King Amittej.



Lord ! A Vidyadhar named Agnighosh has kidnaped your sister Sutara.



Amittej thought—

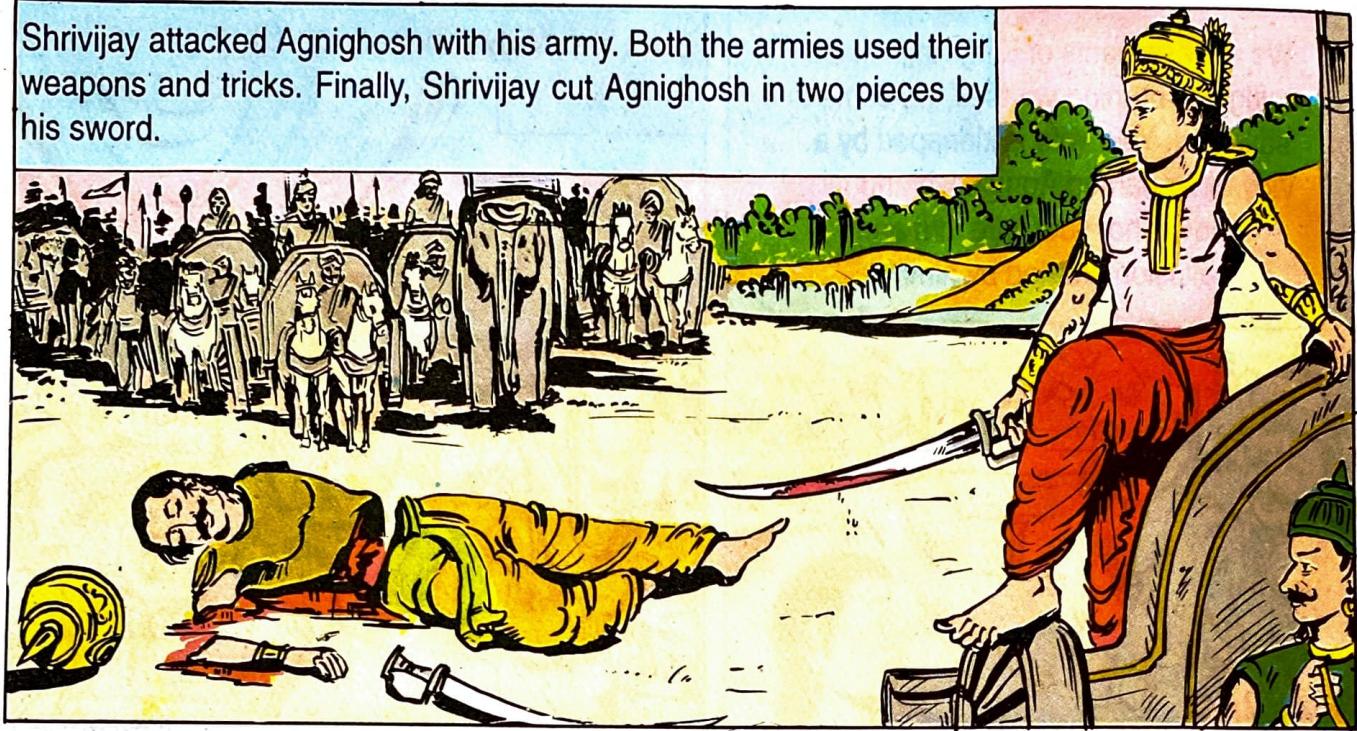


To win over Agnighosh, Mahajwala Vidya is necessary.

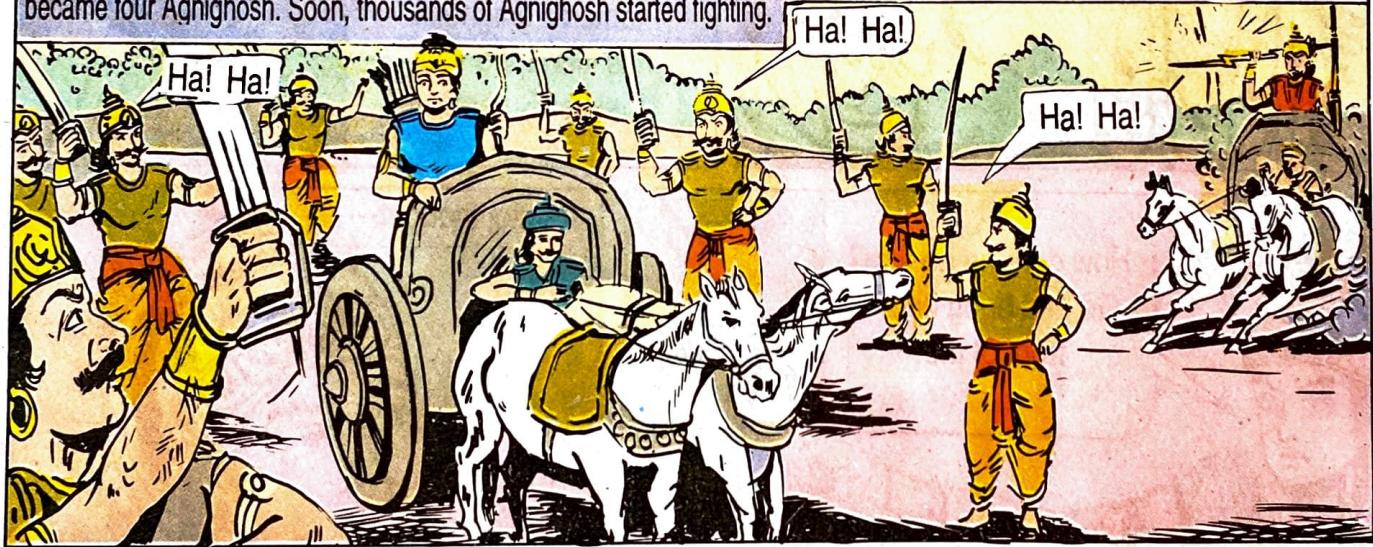
He sent a huge army with Shrivijay to fight against Vidyadhar Agnighosh.

He went to Himvant mountains for attaining that knowledge.

Shrivijay attacked Agnighosh with his army. Both the armies used their weapons and tricks. Finally, Shrivijay cut Agnighosh in two pieces by his sword.

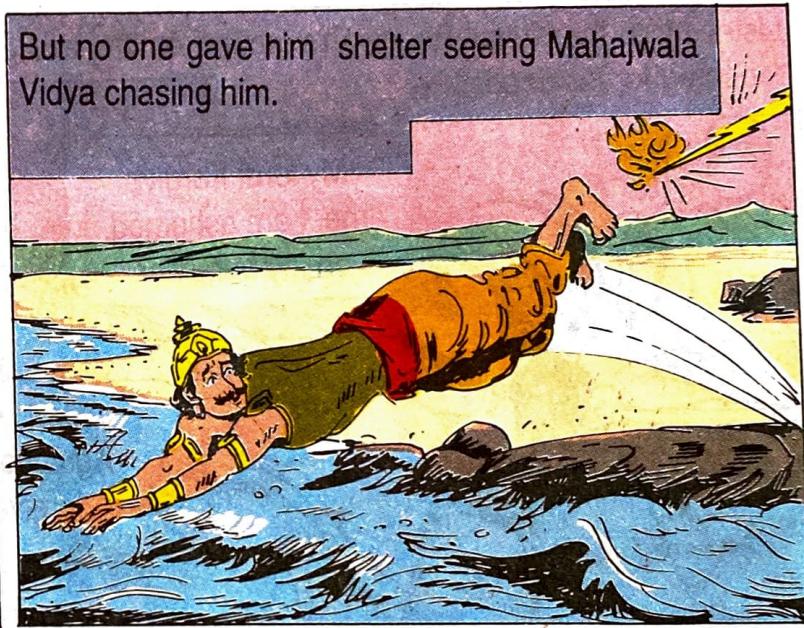
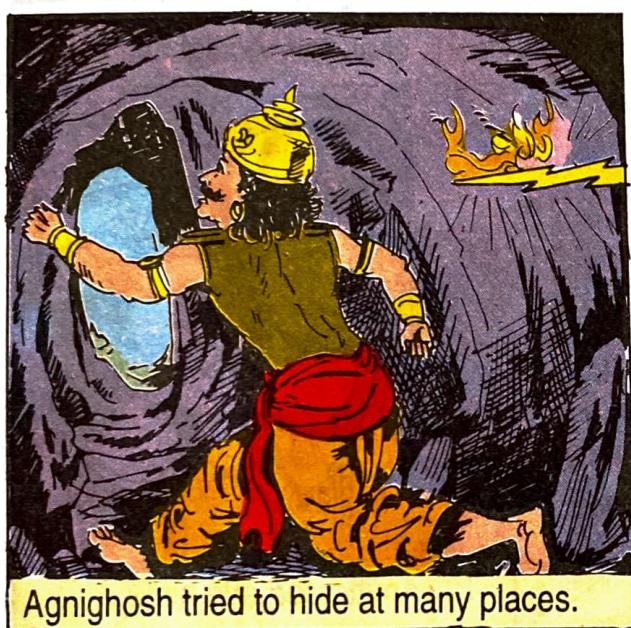
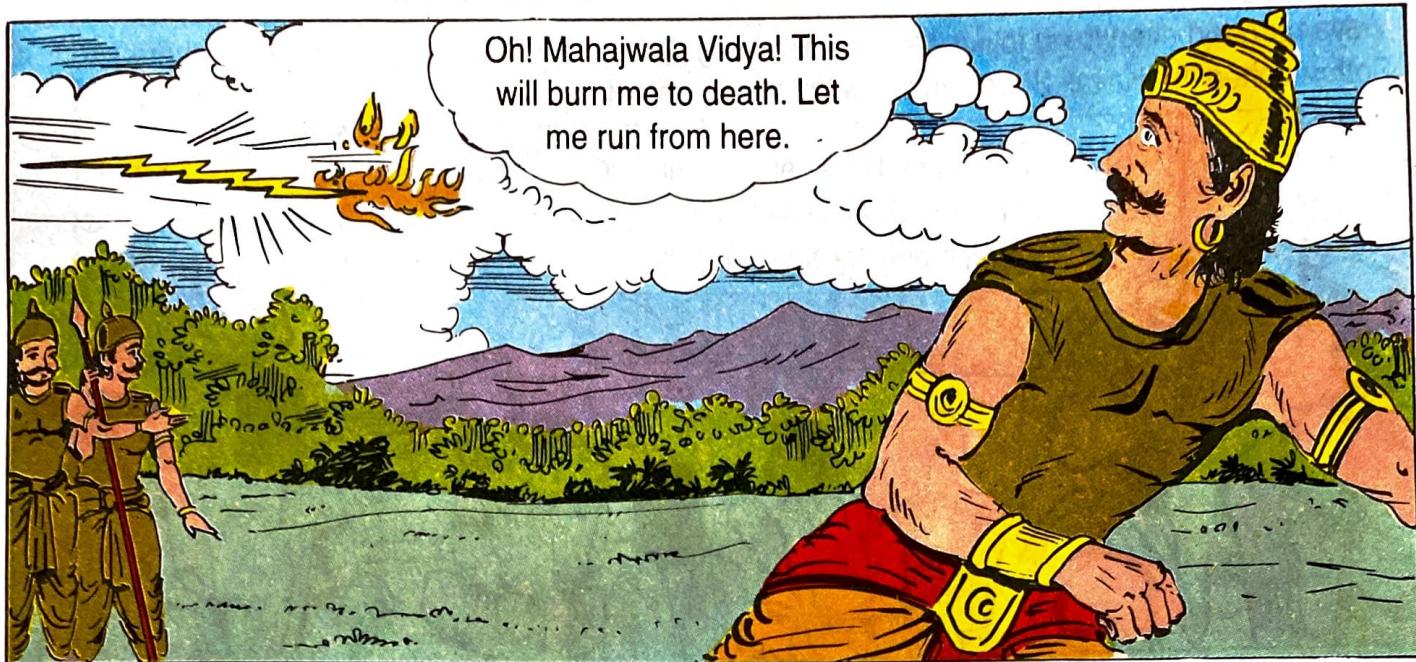


But, what a surprise? Both the pieces became Agnighosh and continued fighting. When two were cut in four pieces, they became four Agnighosh. Soon, thousands of Agnighosh started fighting.

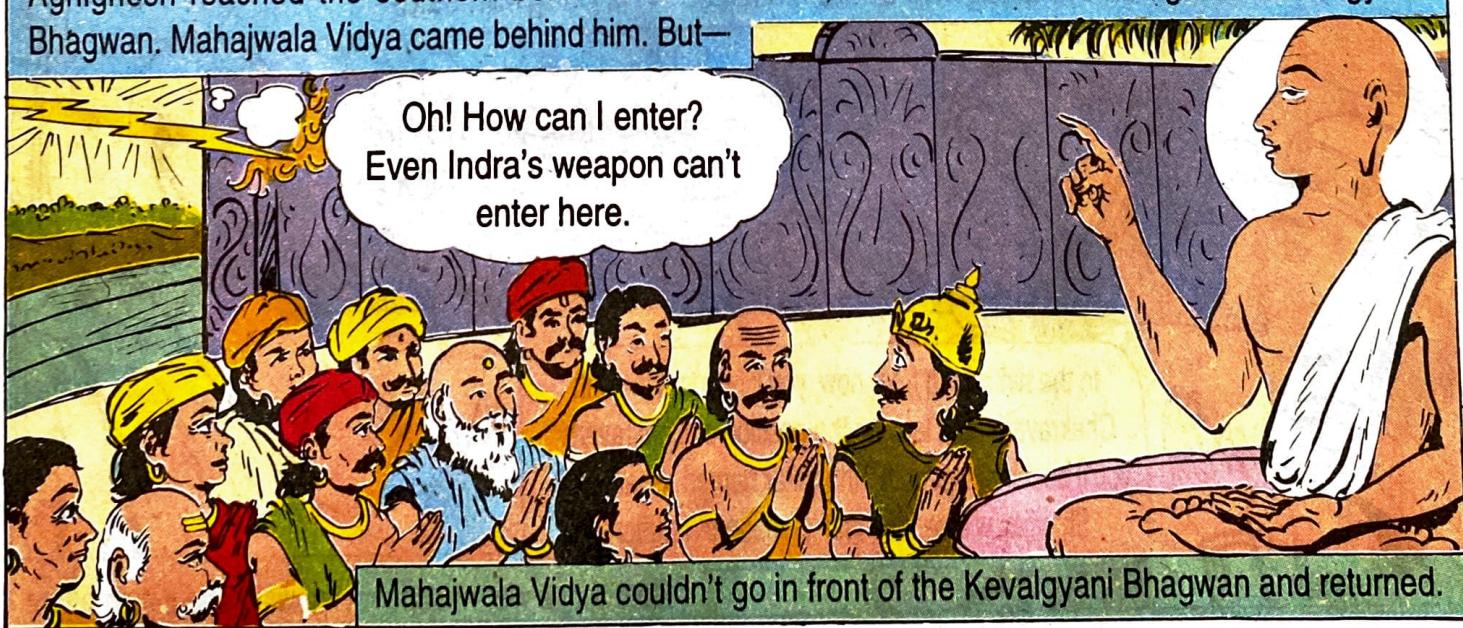


At that time Amittej reached there after acquiring Mahajwala Vidya. He threw Mahajwala Vidya on Agnighosh.



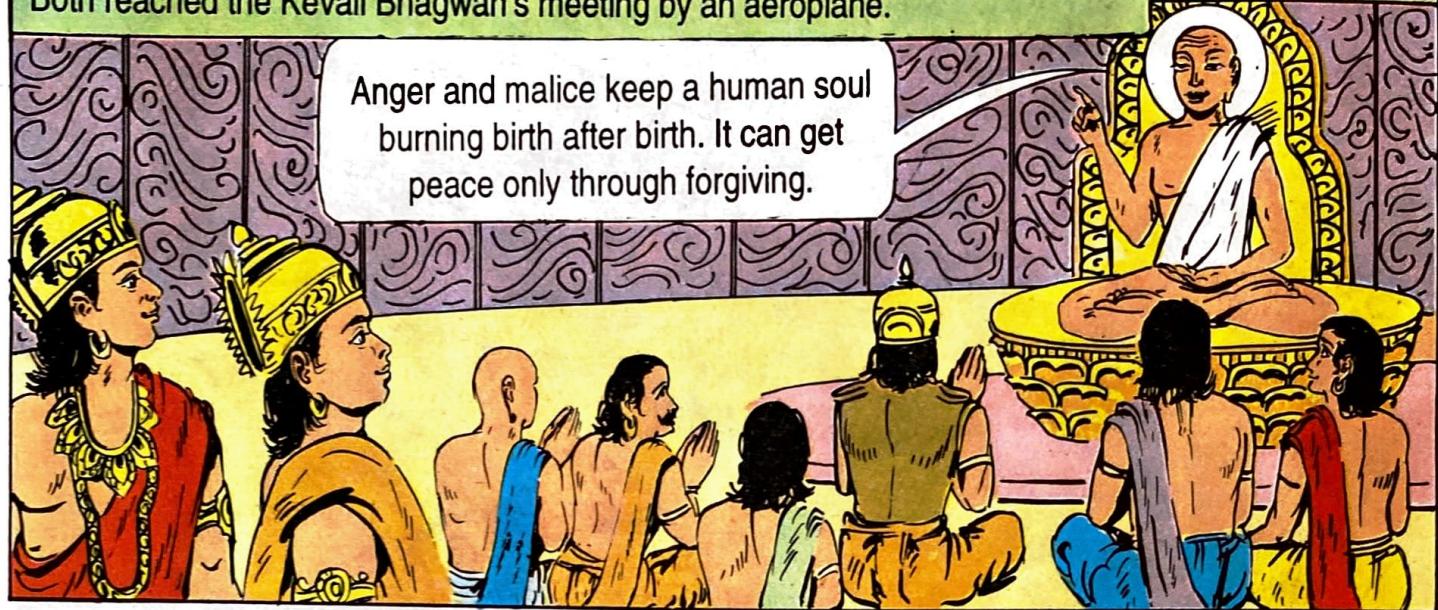


Agnighosh reached the southern border of India. There, he went to the meeting of a Kevalgiani Bhagwan. Mahajwala Vidya came behind him. But—



Mahajwala Vidya couldn't go in front of the Kevalgiani Bhagwan and returned.

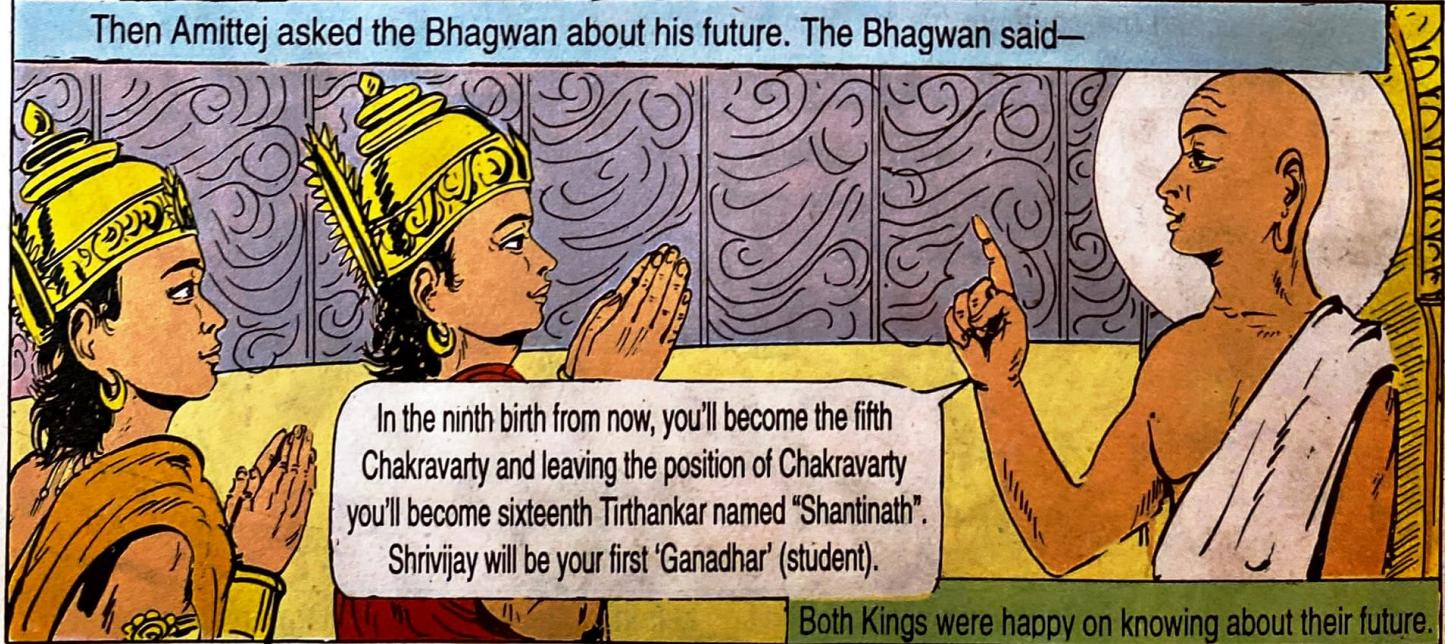
Vidya narrated everything to Amittej after returning. Amittej and Shrivijay decided to go there soon. Both reached the Kevali Bhagwan's meeting by an aeroplane.



Listening to the Kevali Bhagwan's lecture Amittej and Shrivijay's hearts changed. Agnighosh also repented for his deeds.

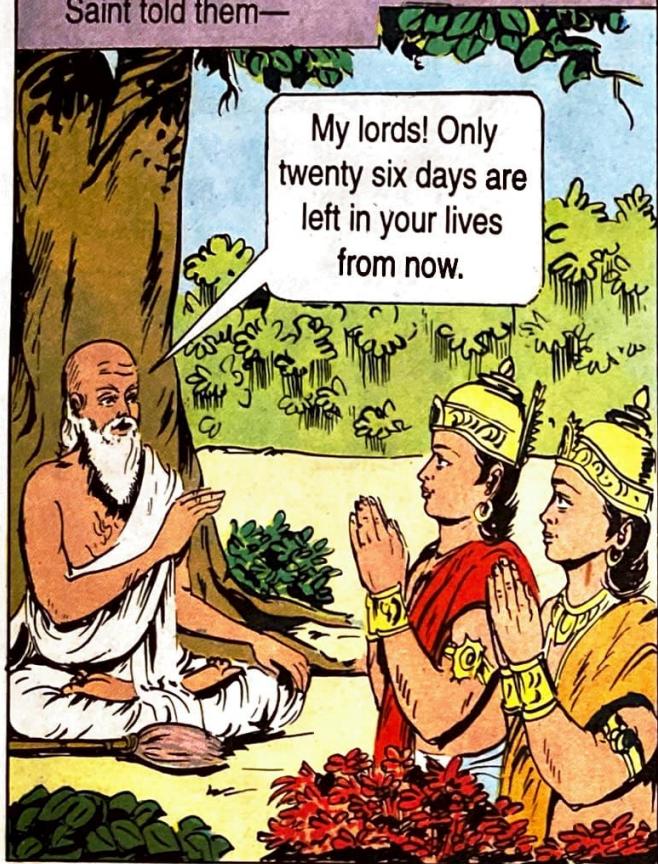


Then Amittej asked the Bhagwan about his future. The Bhagwan said—

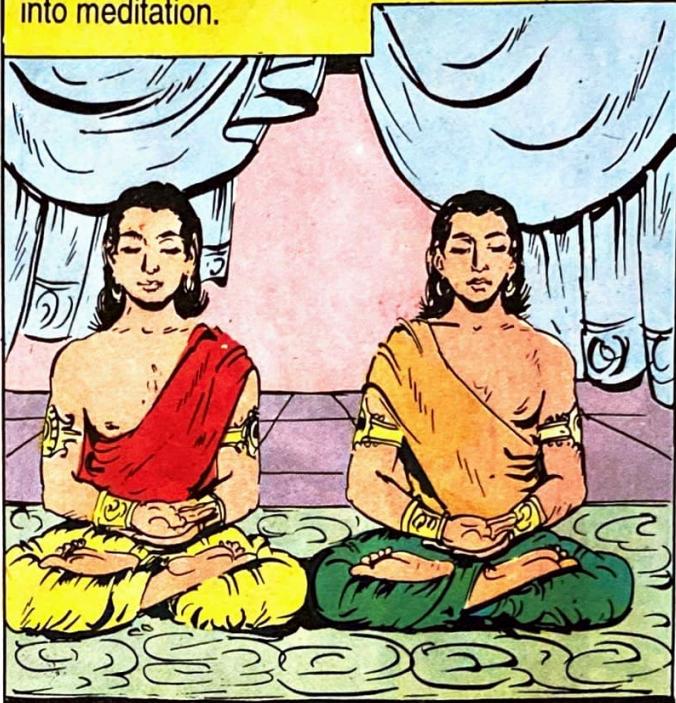


Both Kings were happy on knowing about their future.

Once Amittej and Shrivijay went to see an Avadhygiani* saint. Saint told them—

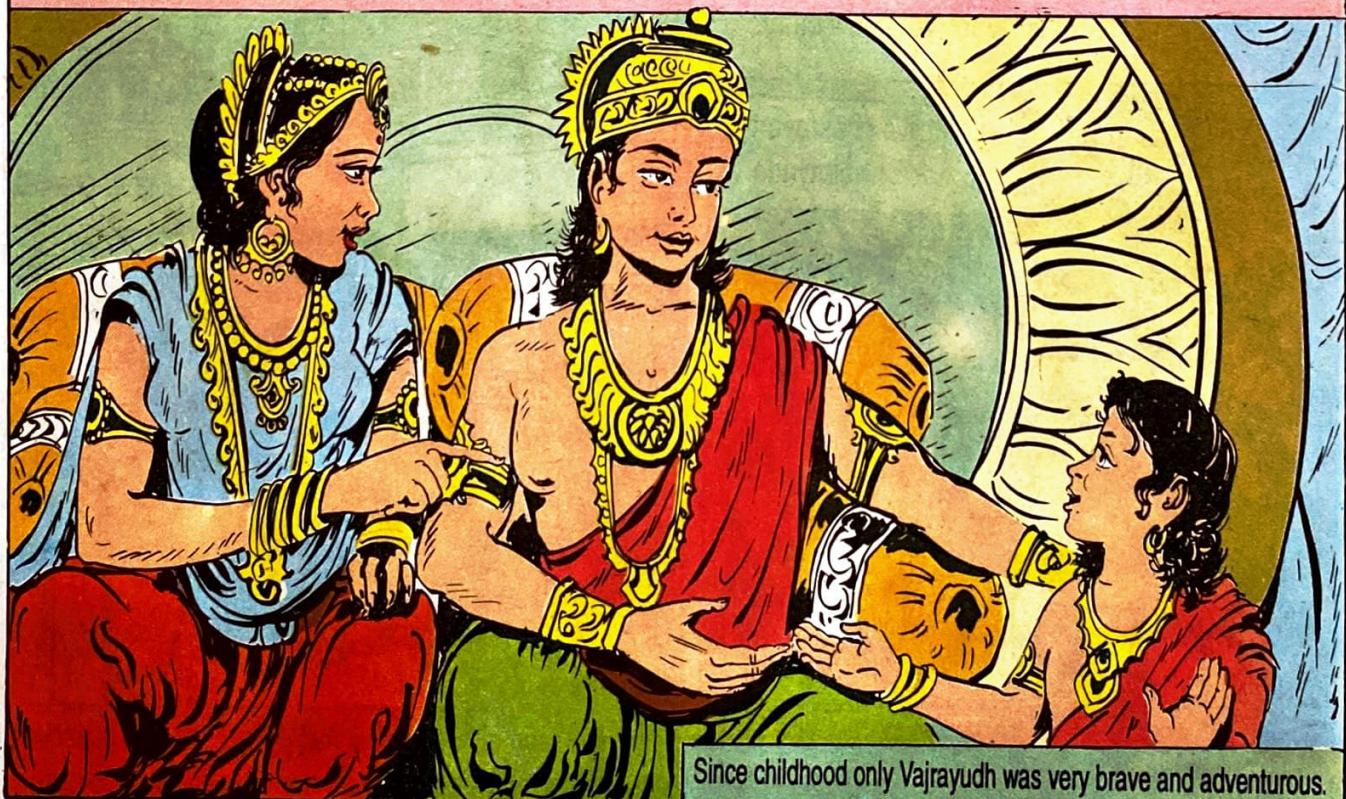


Shocked, both the kings immediately returned to the kingdom, handed over the kingdom to their sons and engrossed themselves into meditation.



They died after twenty six days.

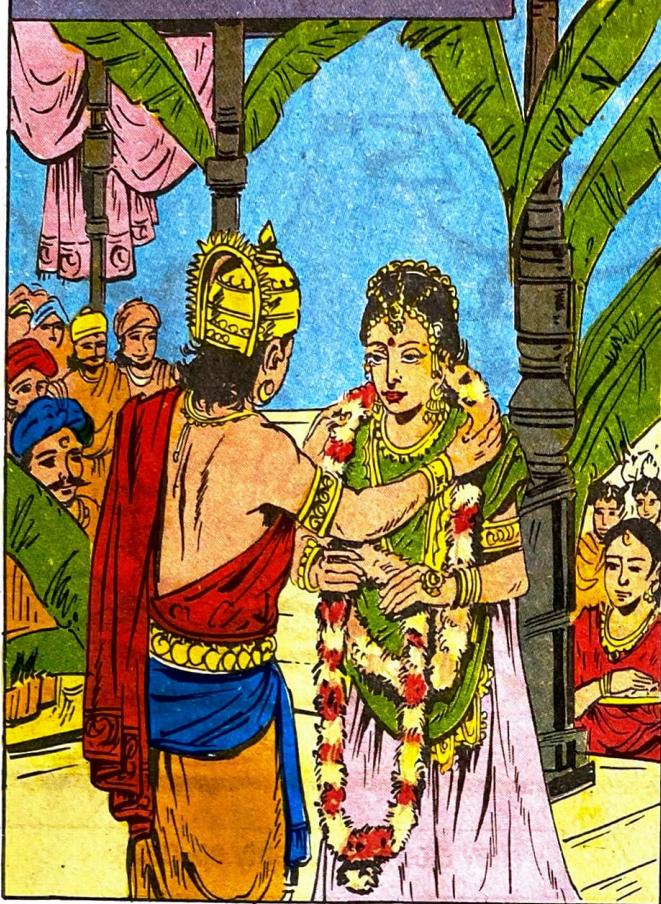
There after, passing through many births, Amittej's soul took birth in Hatna Sanchaya city as a prince of King Kshemankar. He was named as Vajrayudh.



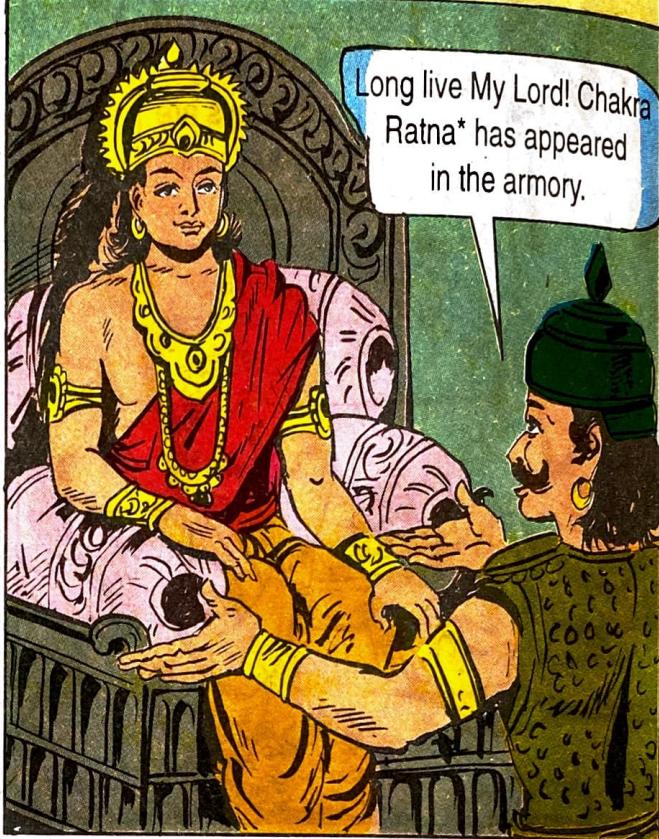
Since childhood only Vajrayudh was very brave and adventurous.

* Avadhygiani—Who knows about the past and the future.

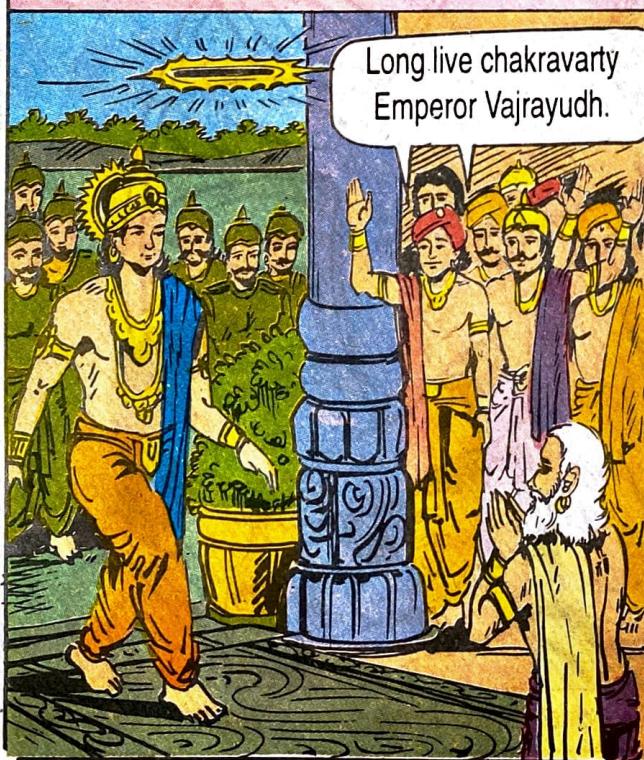
Later on, grown up Vajrayudh was married to Princess Laxmidevi.



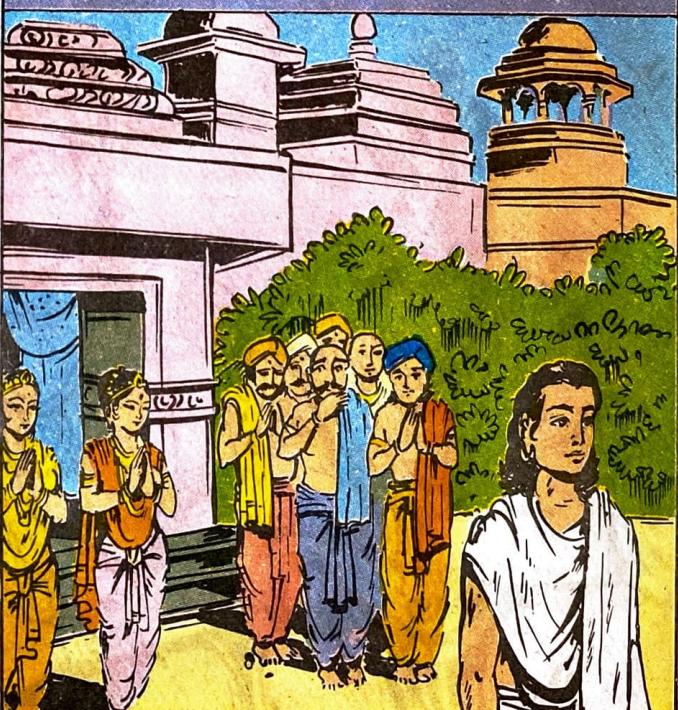
After some time King Kshemankar took Diksha (adapted monkhood) after handing over the kingdom to Vajrayudh. Once while Vajrayudh was sitting in the royal hall, a soldier came from the armory—



Vajrayudh set out to conquer six divisions of Bharat Kshetra with his Chakra Ratna. He got the distinction of a Chakravarty for this victory.



After ruling the kingdom for thousands of years Chakravarty Vajrayudh renounced kingdom and took Diksha.

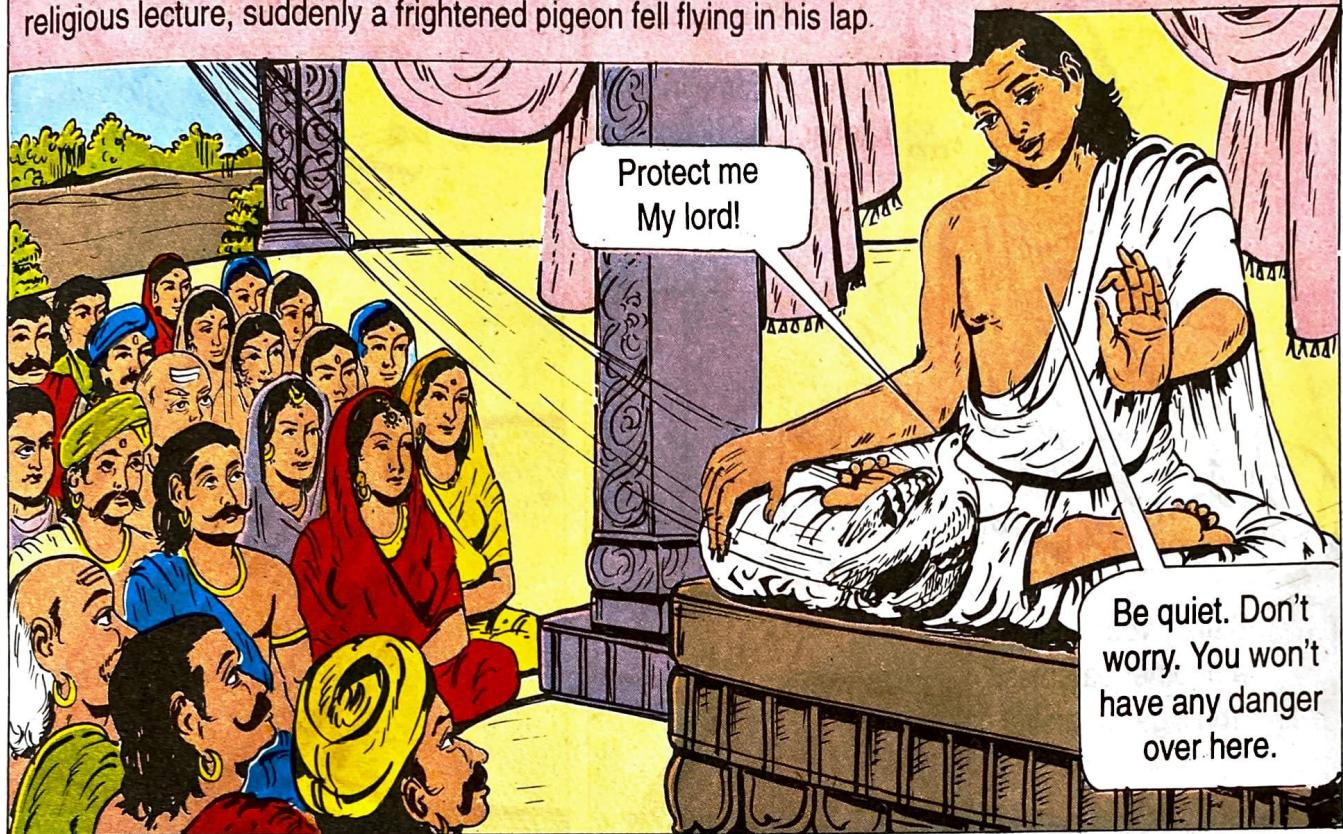


He engrossed himself in meditation. At end, he observed Anshan**, died in meditation and became god in the third heaven.

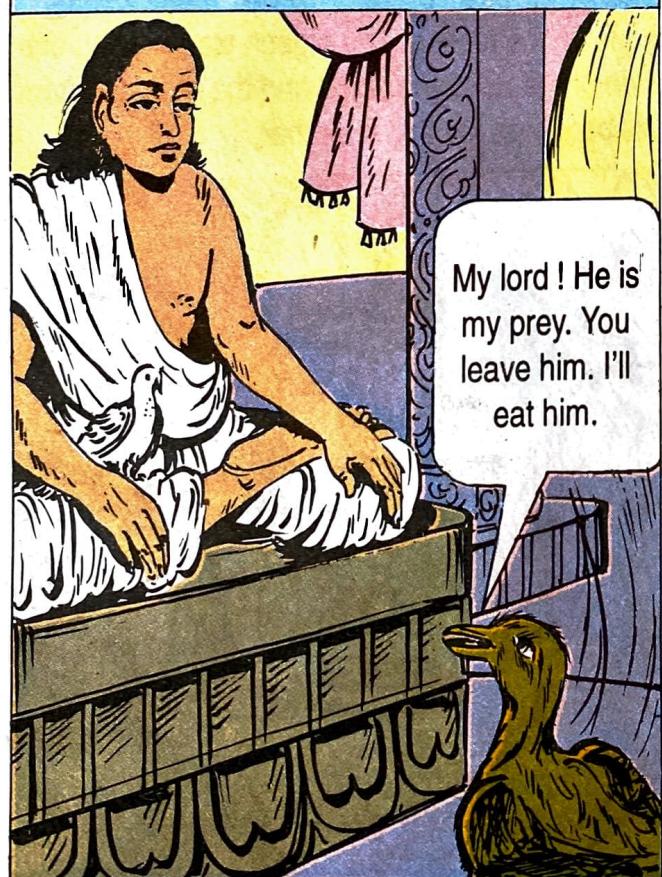
* On Chakra Ratna's appearance, a king conquers six great divisions (states) and becomes Chakravarty.

** Anshan—Fasting.

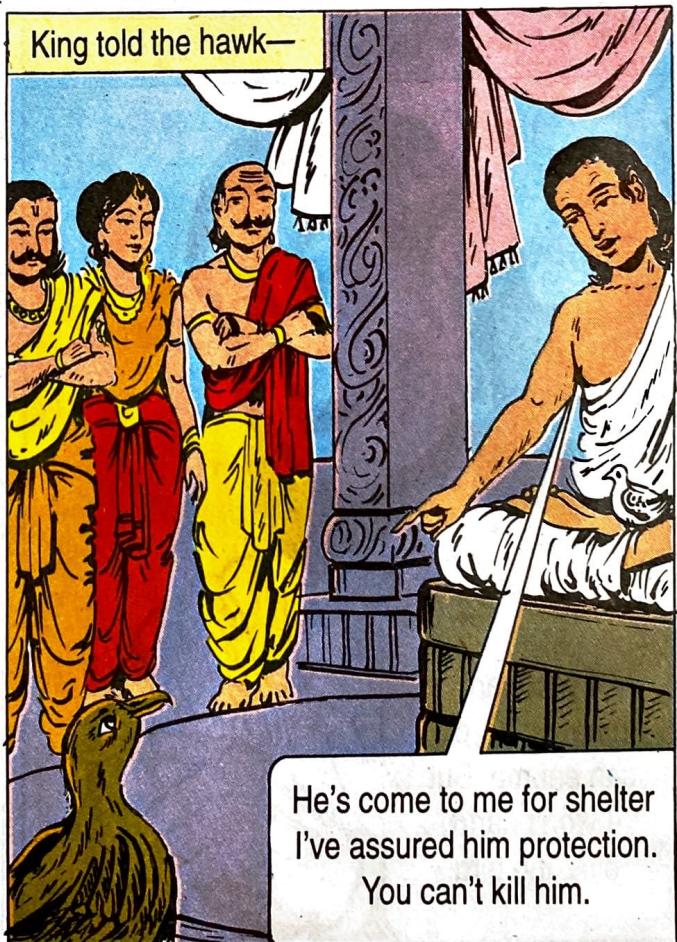
After spending life in the third heaven, Vajrayudh's soul took birth as a king named Meghrath in Pundarikini city. Because of the deep meditation in past lives, King Meghrath was very kind and soft-hearted to all living beings. Once while King Meghrath, observing Paushadh Vrat, was giving religious lecture, suddenly a frightened pigeon fell flying in his lap.

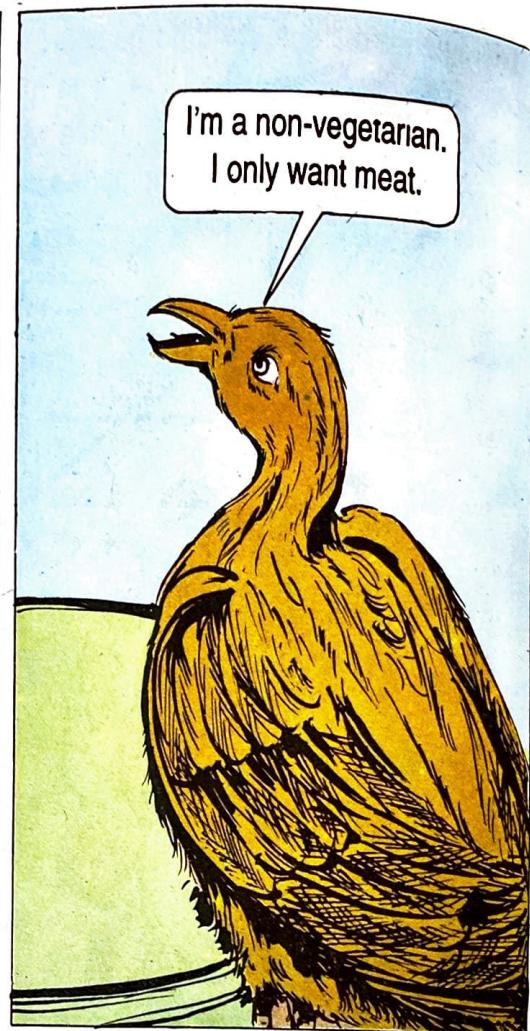
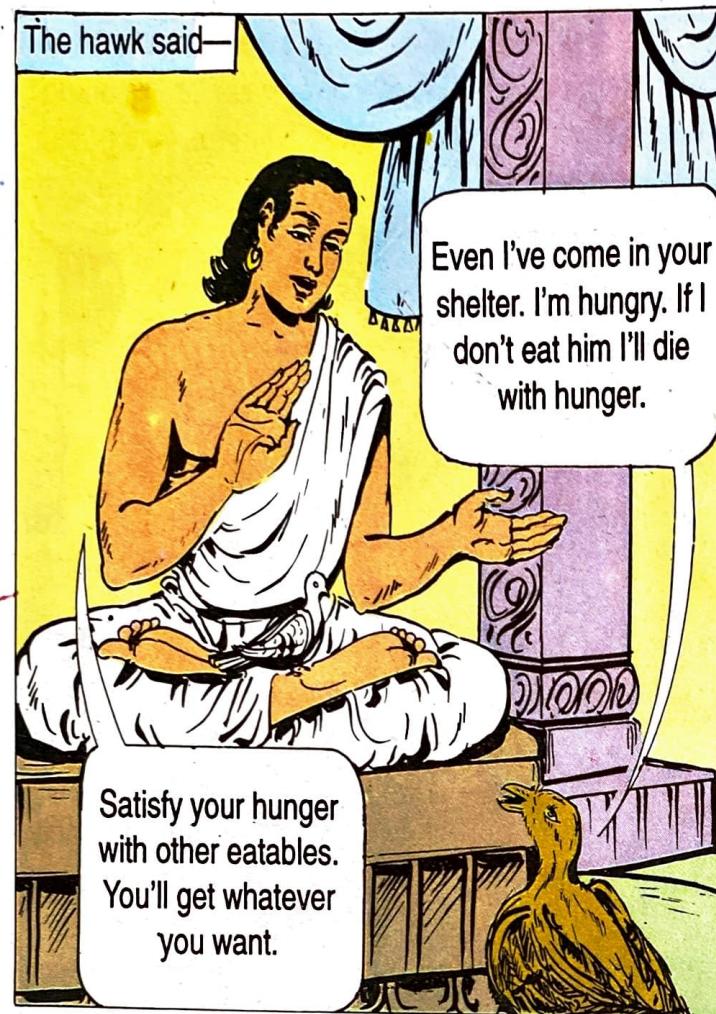


Then a hawk came and told the king—

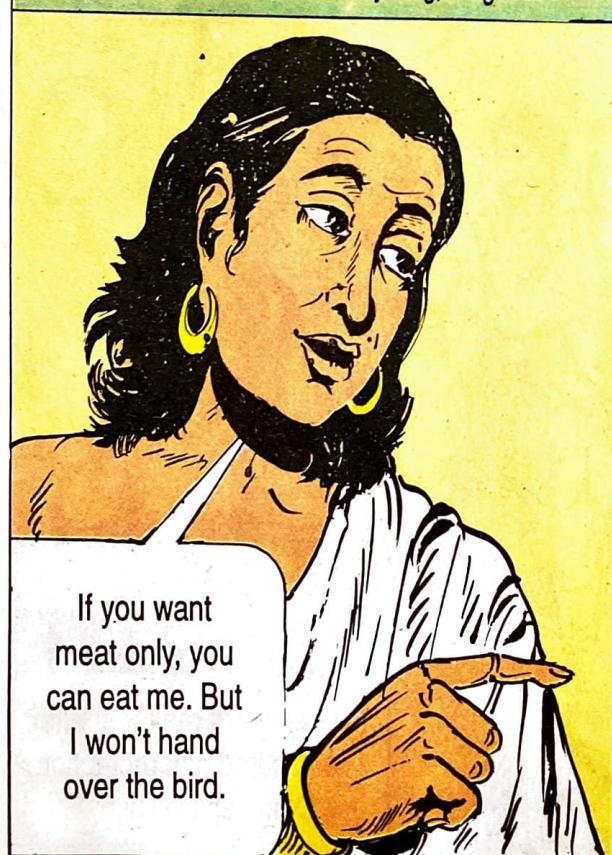


King told the hawk—

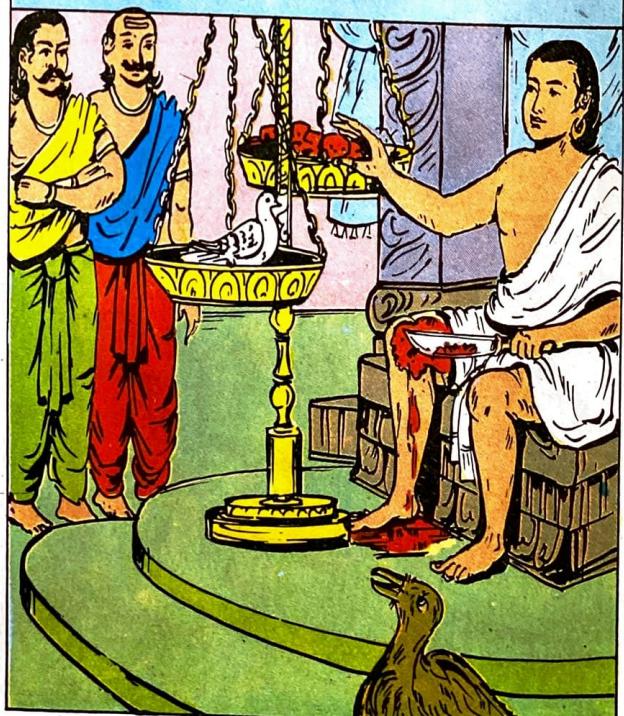




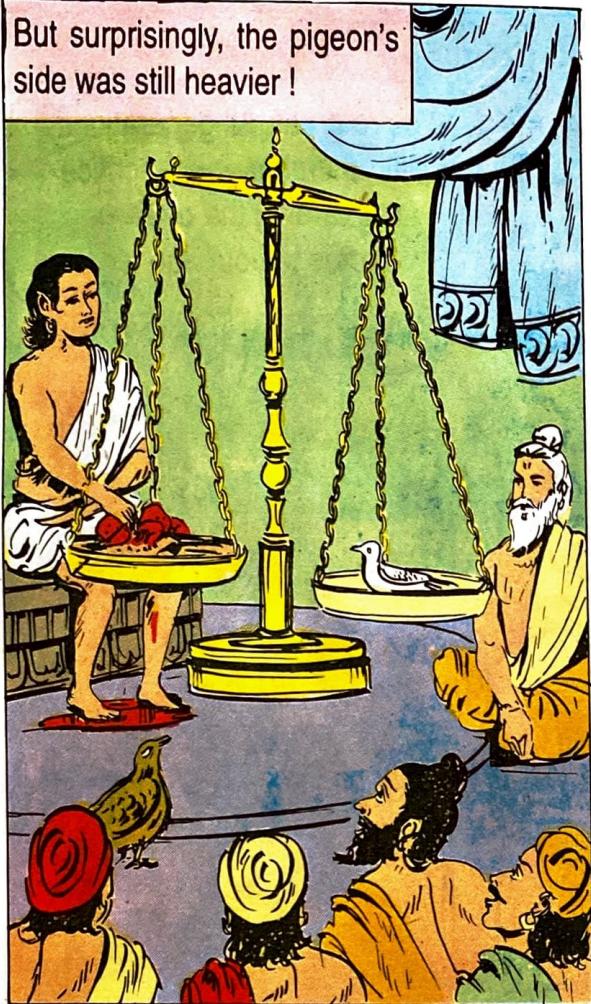
When the hawk didn't agree to anything, King said—



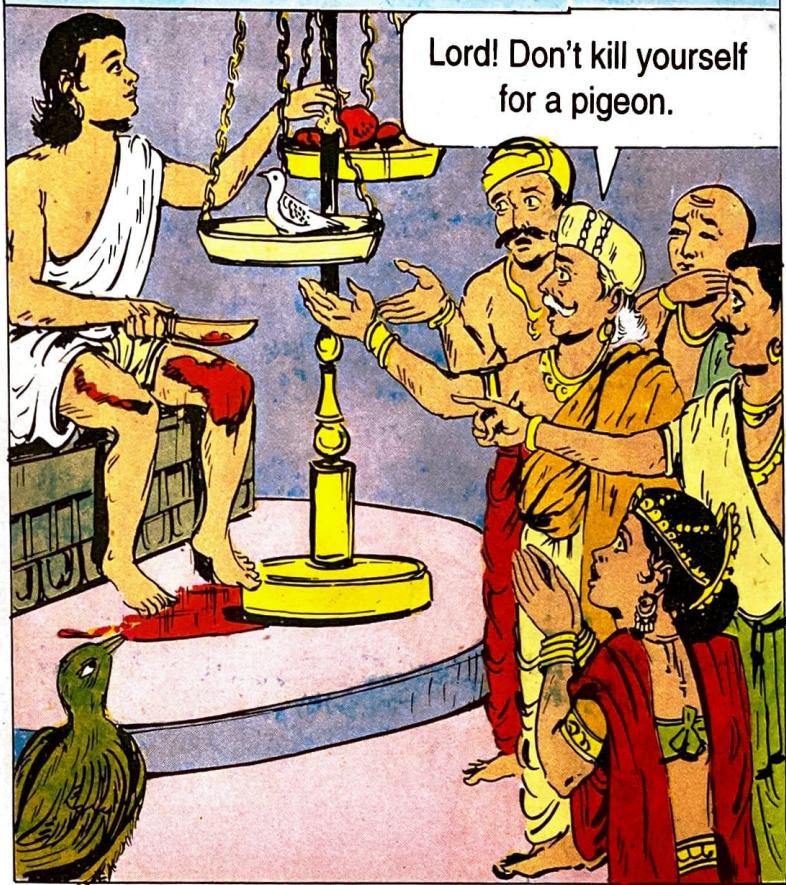
The hawk bird agreed for the meat weighing equal to the pigeon. The pigeon was kept on one side of the weighing scale and the meat cut from his body was kept on the other.



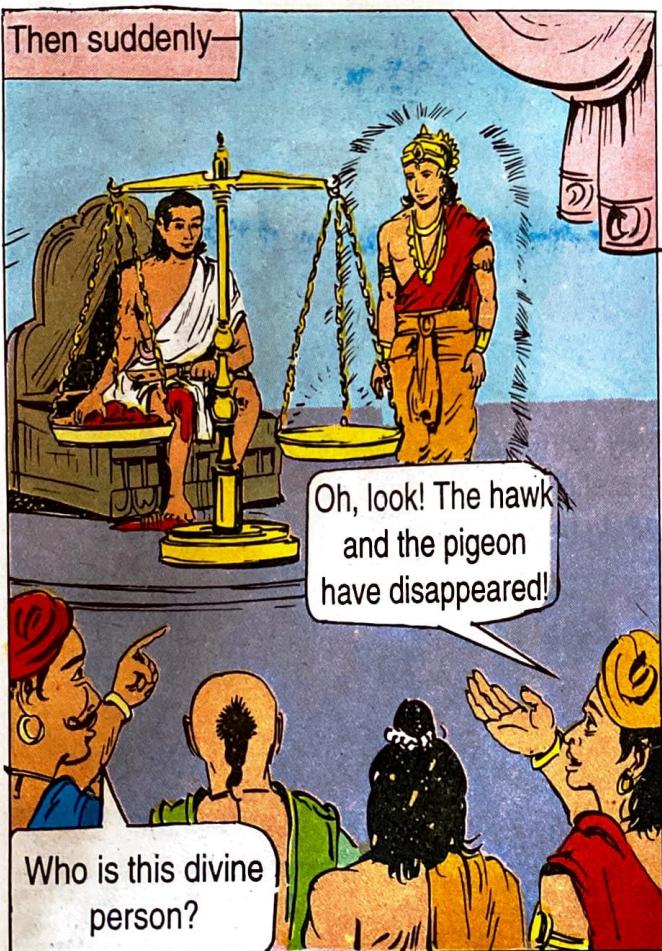
But surprisingly, the pigeon's side was still heavier!



Seeing King cutting his meat everybody including queens, ministers, citizens screamed with pain.



Then suddenly—



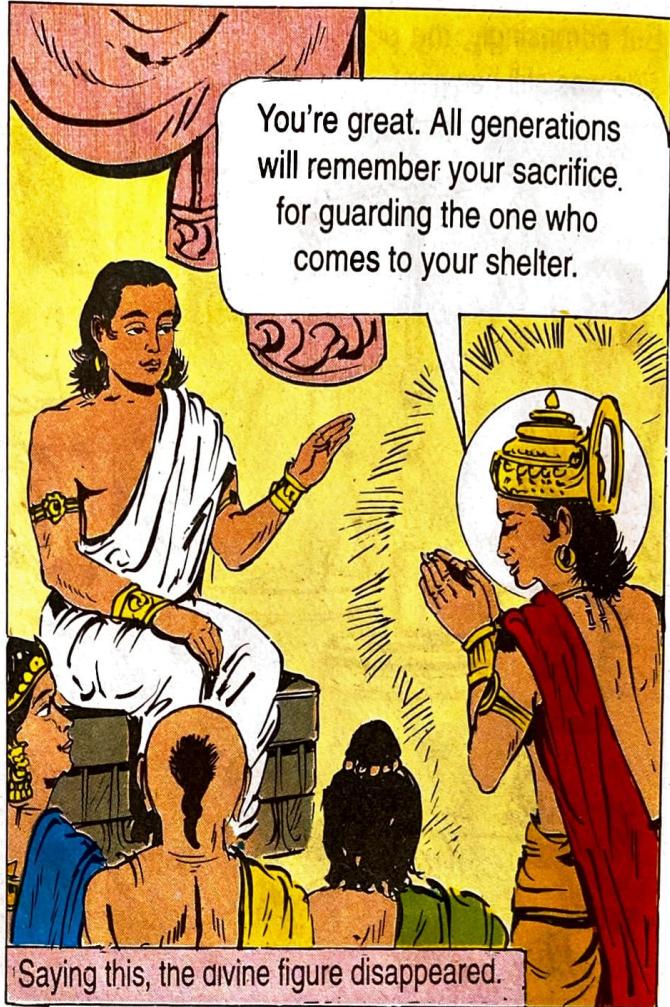
Lord's body also has become normal like before!



Long live merciful King Meghrath!
Pardon me my Lord. I'd done this
trick test your compassion and
kindness to all.

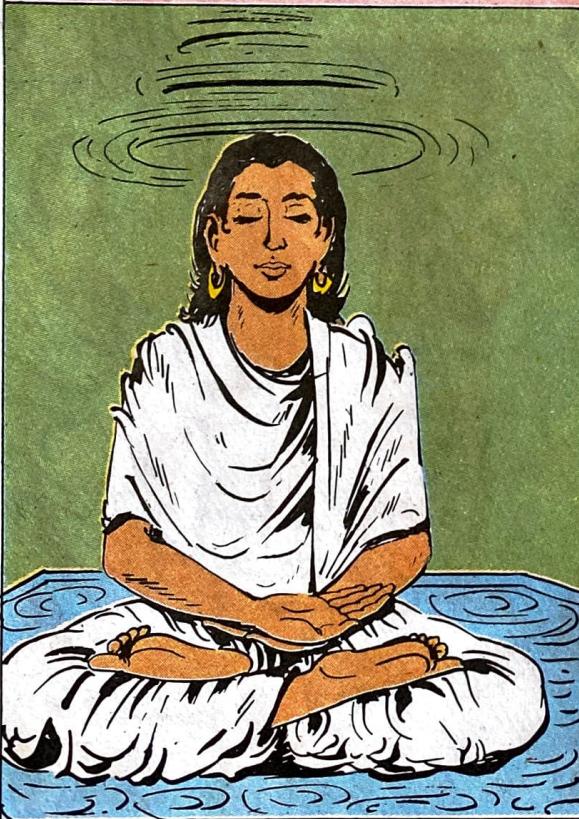


You're great. All generations
will remember your sacrifice,
for guarding the one who
comes to your shelter.



Saying this, the divine figure disappeared.

Once on the fourteenth day of the month, King Meghrath was observing Paushad Vrat and was in deep meditation.



God Indra bowed down to him from heaven seeing his great ascetic nature.



Oh worldly saint!
Great ascetic! I
bow down to you.

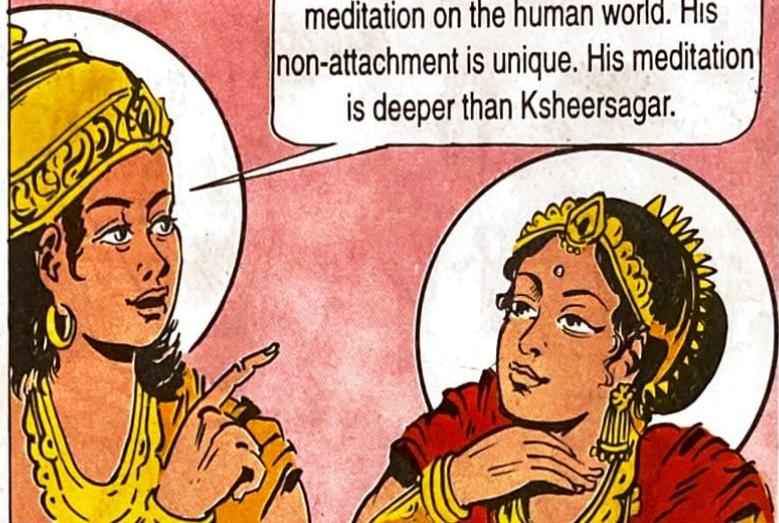
Indrani asked—

Lord ! Whom are you bowing down?



Indra said—

King Meghrath is engrossed in self meditation on the human world. His non-attachment is unique. His meditation is deeper than Ksheersagar.



Indrani didn't like Meghrath's praise by Indra.

Indrani came to the human world alongwith two goddesses to interrupt King Meghrath's meditation. They tried many different romantic gestures to lure him.



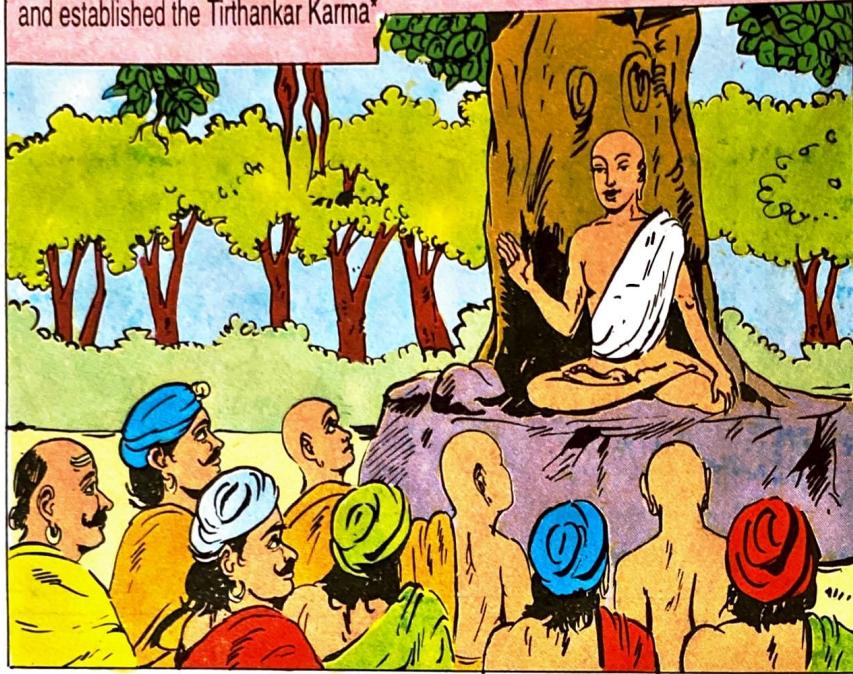
But Meghrath remained unruffled.

At the end Indrani asked King Meghrath to forgive them.



And Indrani returned to heaven alongwith the goddesses.

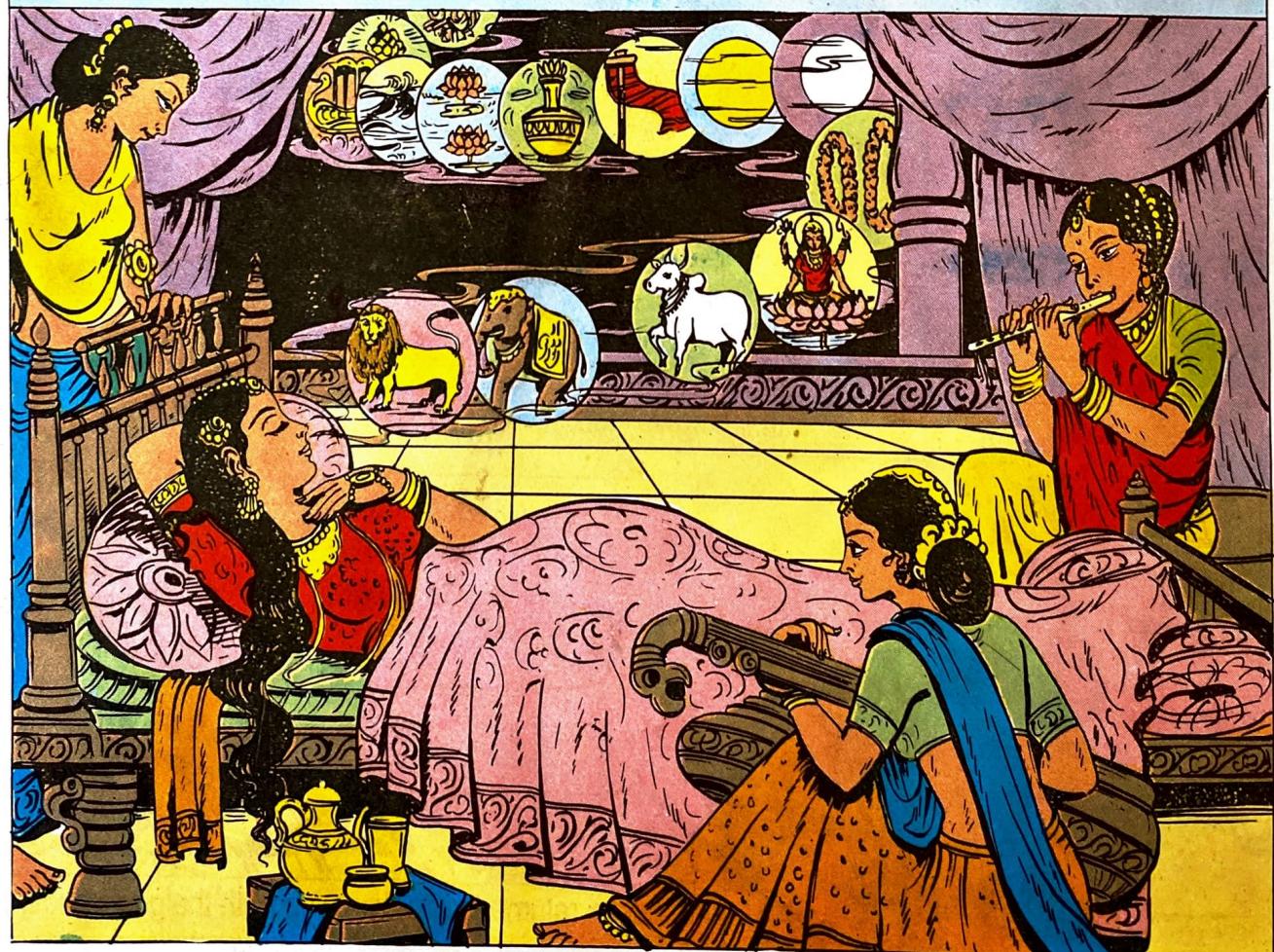
After some time, King Meghrath left worldly pleasures and accepted monkhood. He showed the way of achieving self realisation by doing different types of penance, meditation etc. to the masses for one lakh years. He worshipped twenty sacred places and established the Tirthankar Karma*.



He became god in Sarvarth Siddha Vimaan after death.

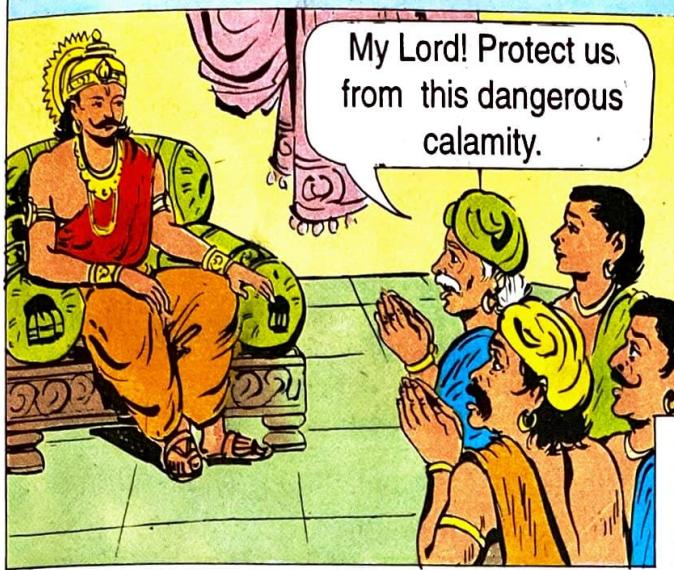


After completing life in Sarvarth Siddha Vimaan, Meghrath's soul entered in the womb of Queen Achiradevi, wife of Ikshvakuvaanshi King Vishvasen of Hastinapur. Queen saw fourteen great dreams representing a Tirthankar's birth

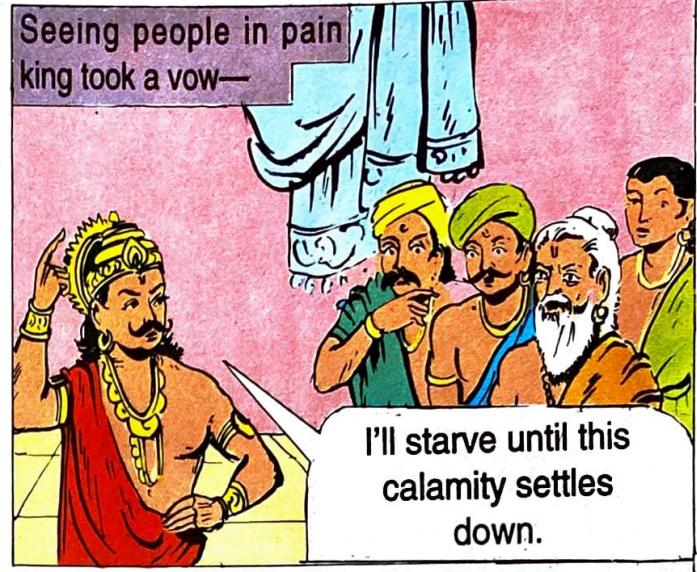


* Tirthankar Karma—After establishing this, one becomes a Tirthankar in the next birth.

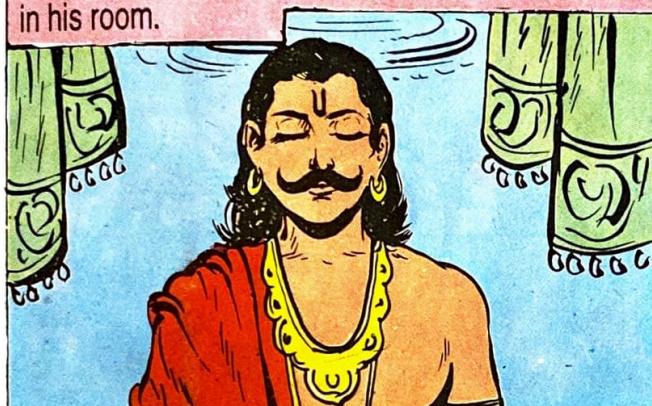
Once in Hastinapur, a dangerous epidemic spread. Hundreds of people died everyday. Horrified people came to King Vishvasen.



Seeing people in pain, king took a vow—

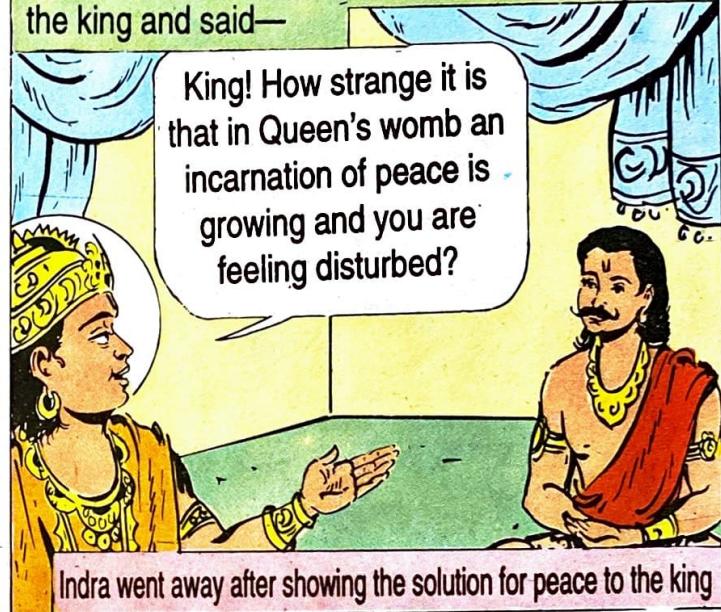


Vishvasen became engrossed in deep meditation in his room.



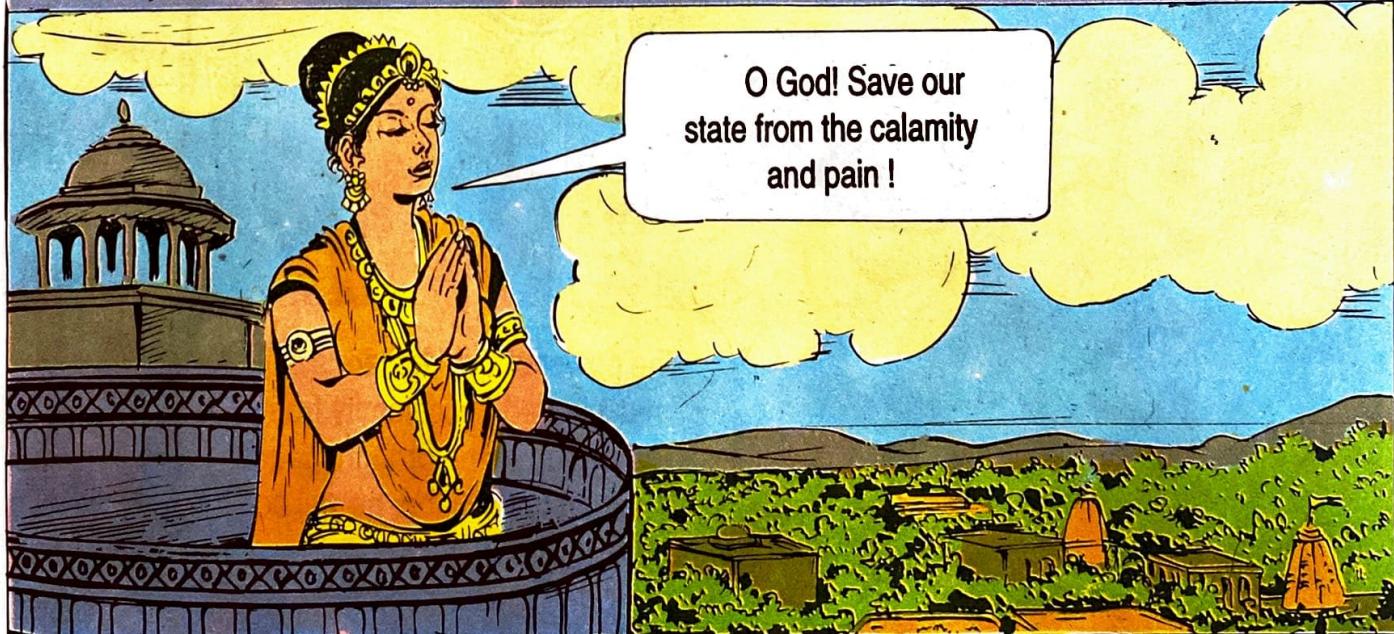
He meditated for a full month without any food or drink.

His intense meditation moved Indra. He came to the king and said—



Indra went away after showing the solution for peace to the king.

Next day Queen Achiradevi muttered Shanti Stotra as told by Indra.



On muttering Shanti Stotra, calamity, diseases, pain everything vanished from the kingdom.

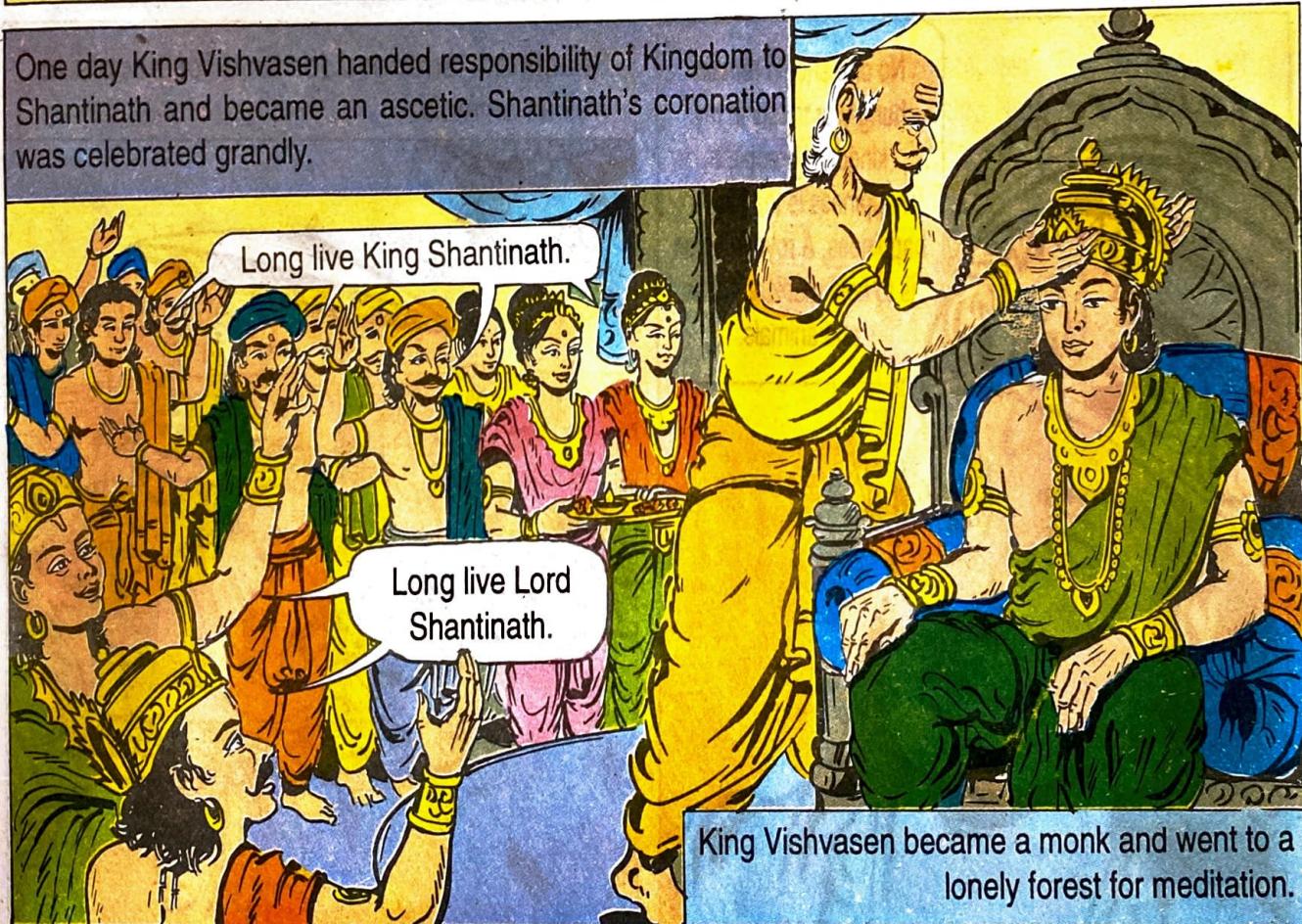
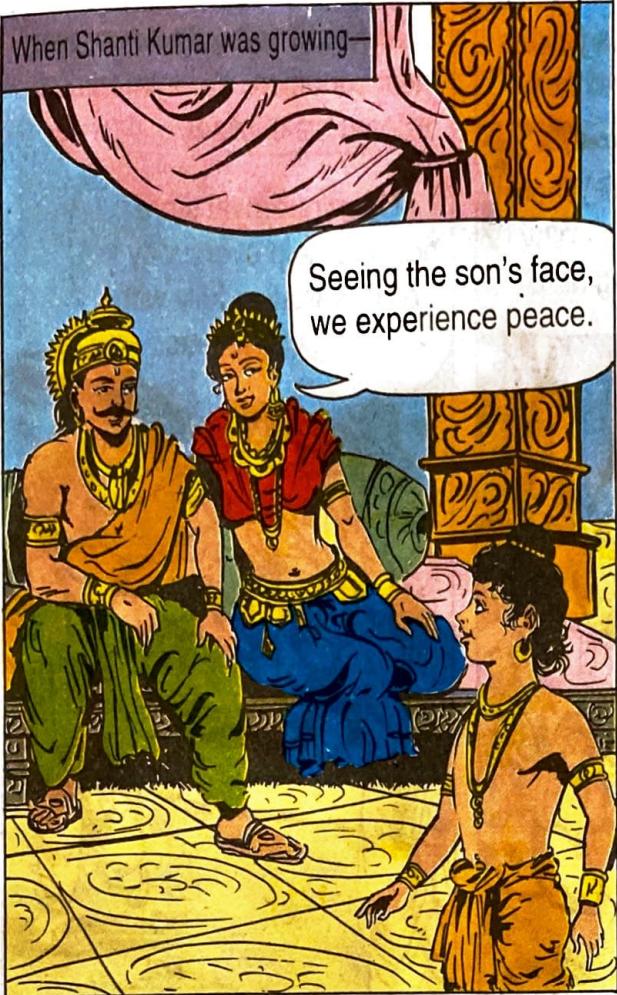
In the kingdom today none died, none is sick and there's no calamity, too.

Wow! It's peace everywhere as if nothing has happened.

Queen gave birth to a son on thirteenth day of the darker half of Jyeshtha month. All three universes were illuminated on the child-birth. There was joy everywhere. Thousands of Gods including Indra came on the earth to celebrate

The power of this righteous child has cleared the calamity from Hastinapur. As he brought peace (Shanti) to this land, he will be called Shanti Kumar.



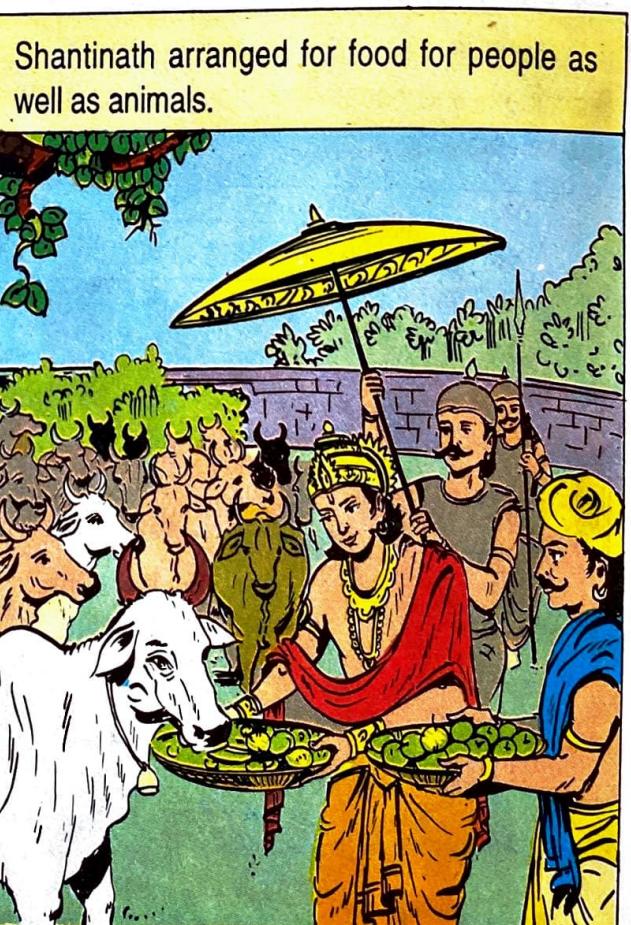
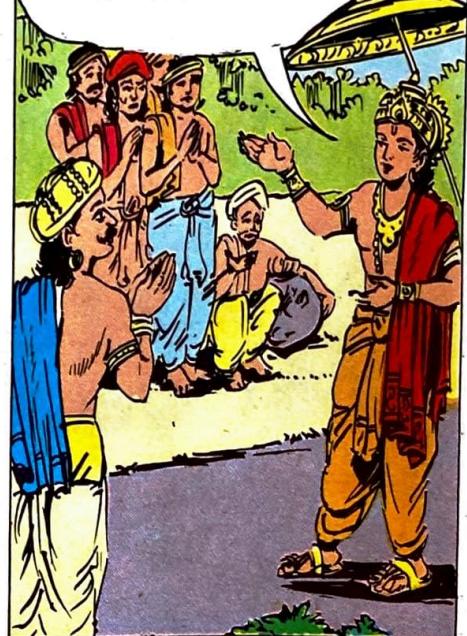


Once King Shantinath was roaming in the kingdom to know his people's welfare. He saw groups of people sitting. He went near and asked them—

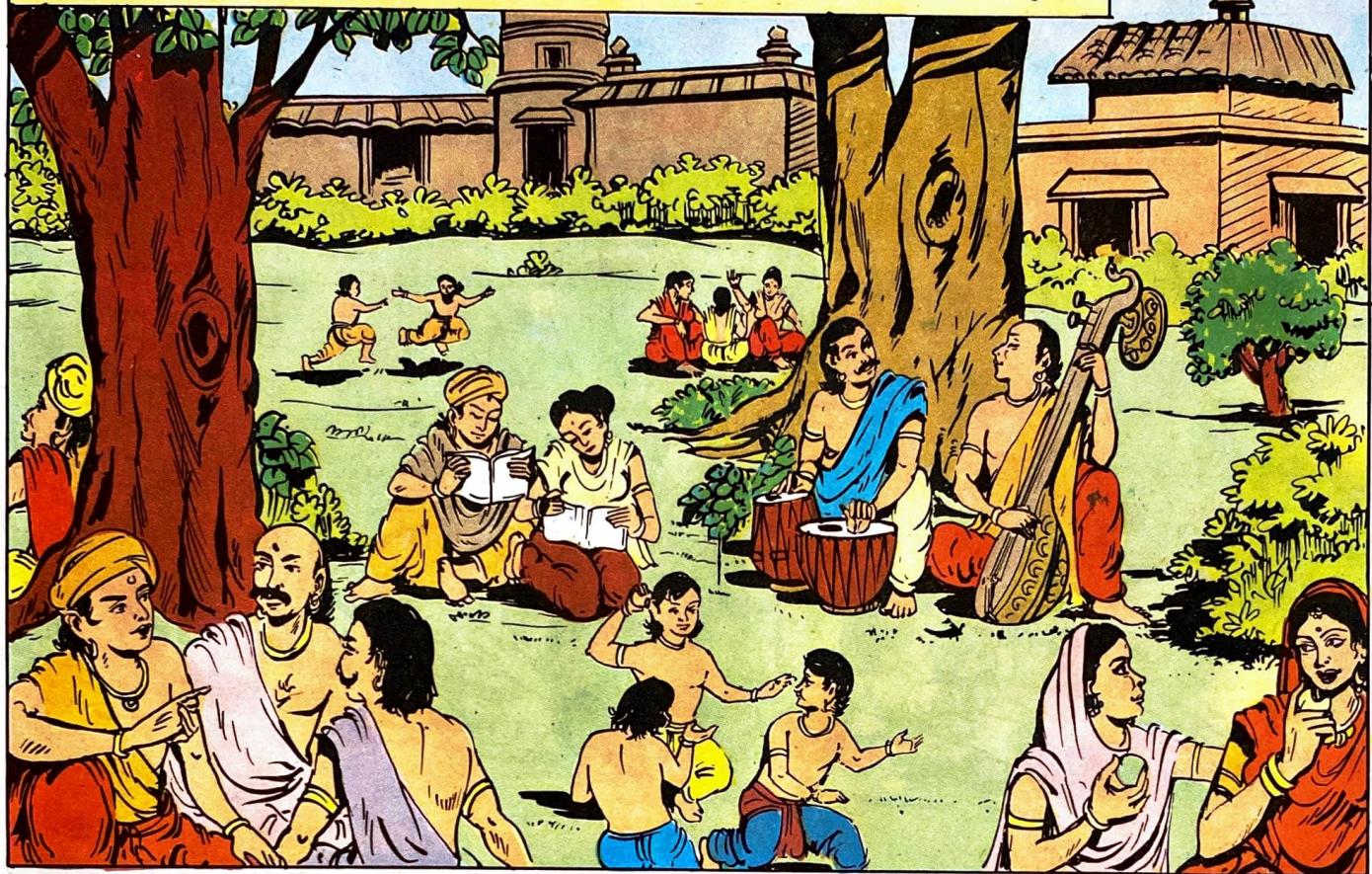


Shantinath felt pity on seeing their condition. He immediately ordered his minister.

Open our royal store houses. Help everybody in pain or trouble fully with food, clothes etc.



There was happiness everywhere in Shantinath's kingdom. People were not aware about things like robbery and murders. There was neither drought nor calamity anytime in his kingdom.



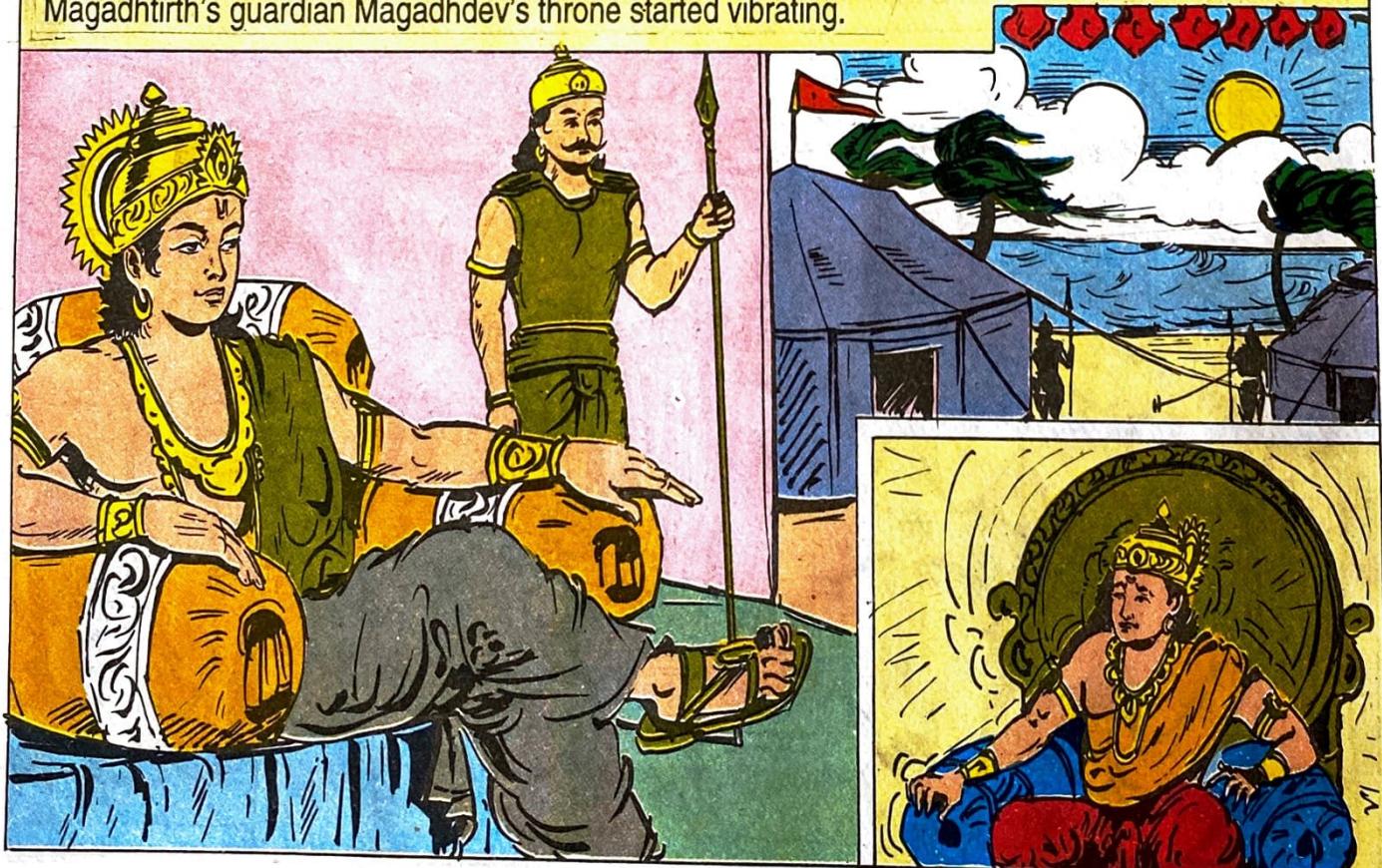
Lord Shantinath ruled over the kingdom for twenty five thousand years with justice and morality. Due to the power of past religious deeds a Chakra Ratna appeared in the armory. King worshipped the Chakra Ratna and celebrated the occasion.



Later, the Chakra Ratna came out of the armory and moved towards the East. Lord Shantinath alongwith his huge army followed it to conquer six divisions.



Army halted at the sea shore. The king sat on a throne facing towards Magadhtirth. As a result, Magadhtirth's guardian Magadhdev's throne started vibrating.



He saw with Avadhigyan.



Magadhdev immediately went to worship Shantinath.

My lord! I, Magadhdev, the guardian of the East have come in your service.



Magadhdev accepted Shantinath's subordination by offering many divine gifts.

Chakra Ratna went towards the South. The kings there also accepted Shantinath's subordination without any war. Similarly, Shantinath conquered six divisions and returned to Hastinapur with his huge army.



Shantinath ruled over the six divisions for thousands of years with his strength and religious conduct.

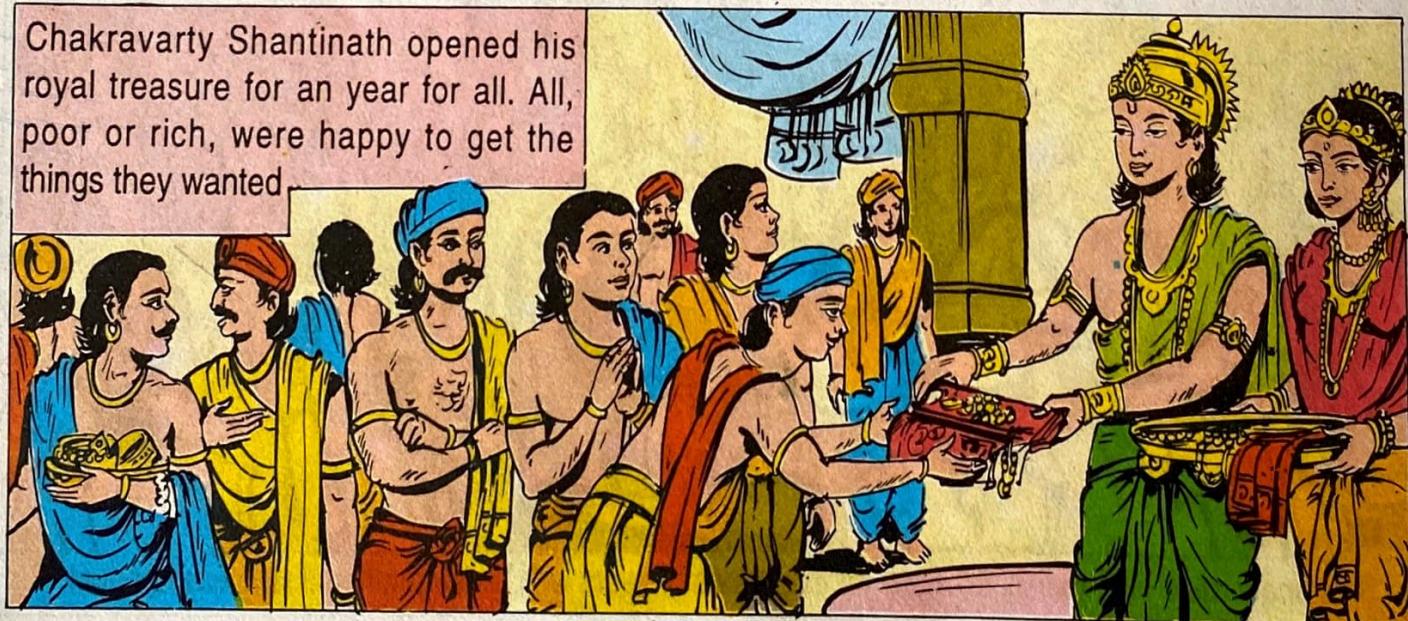
One day Chakravarty Shantinath was thinking.



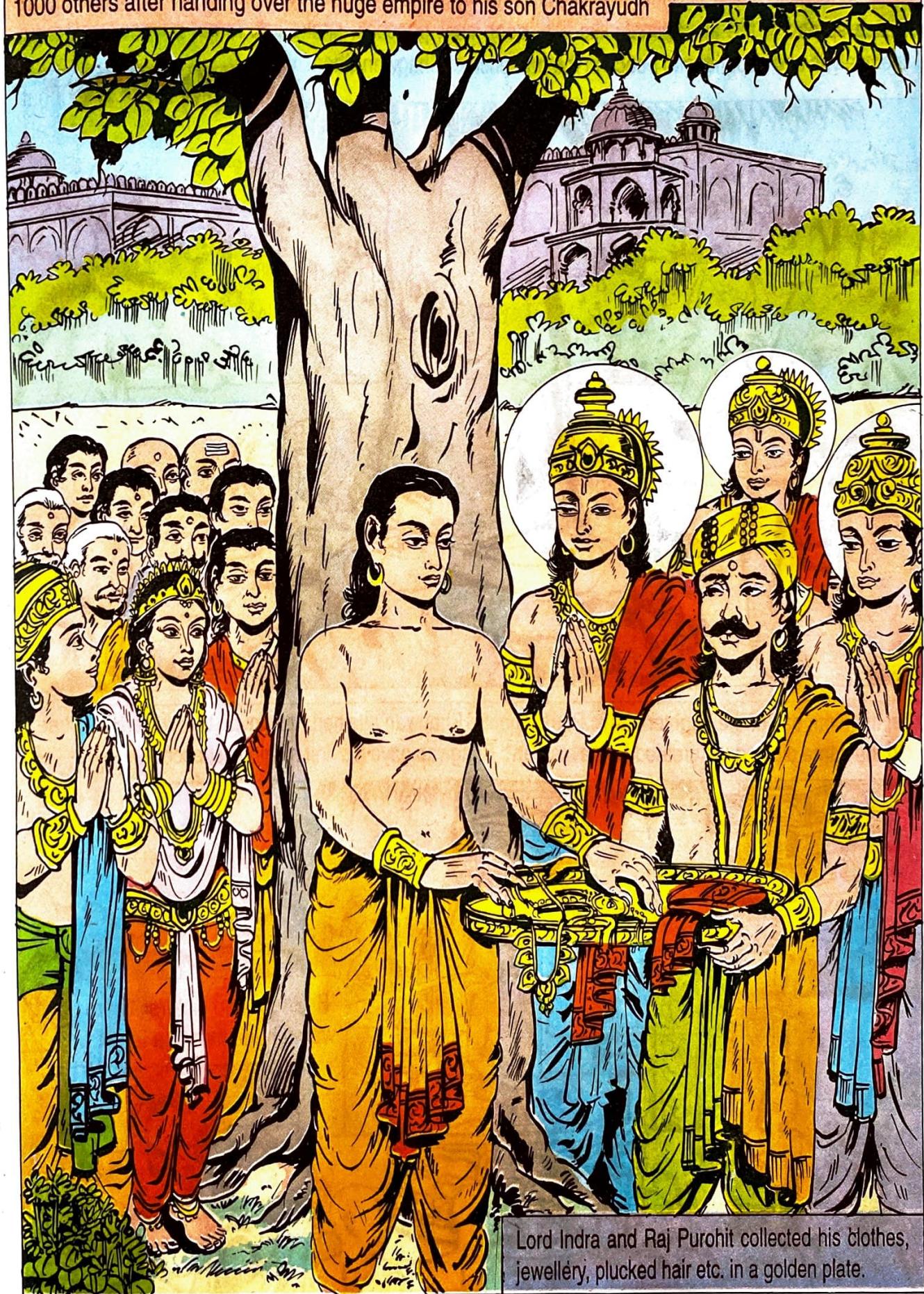
He decided to accept monkhood. Nine gods appeared and requested:



Chakravarty Shantinath opened his royal treasure for a year for all. All, poor or rich, were happy to get the things they wanted.

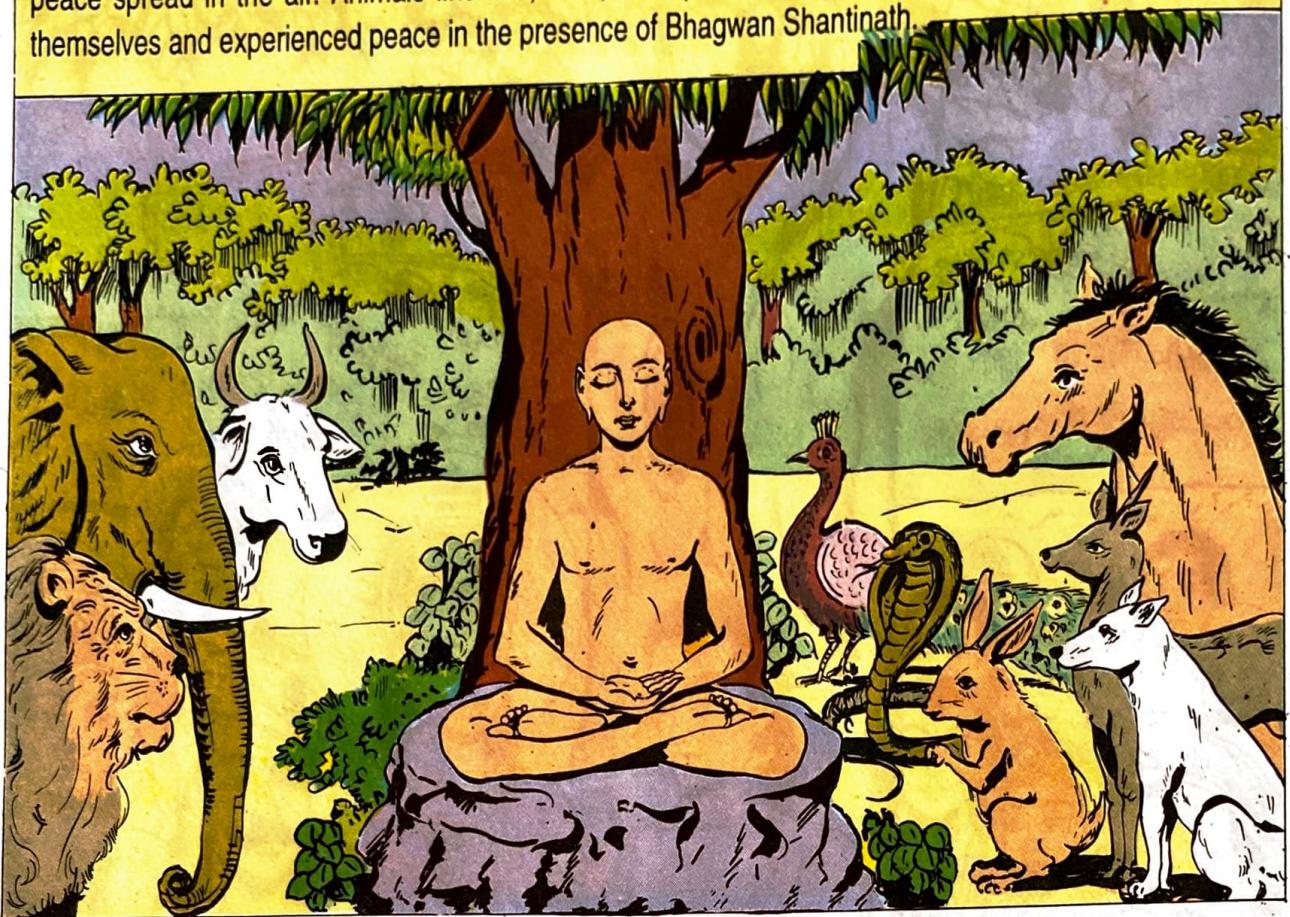


On the eleventh day of the darker half of Jyeshta month, Shantinath adopted monkhood alongwith 1000 others after handing over the huge empire to his son Chakrayudh

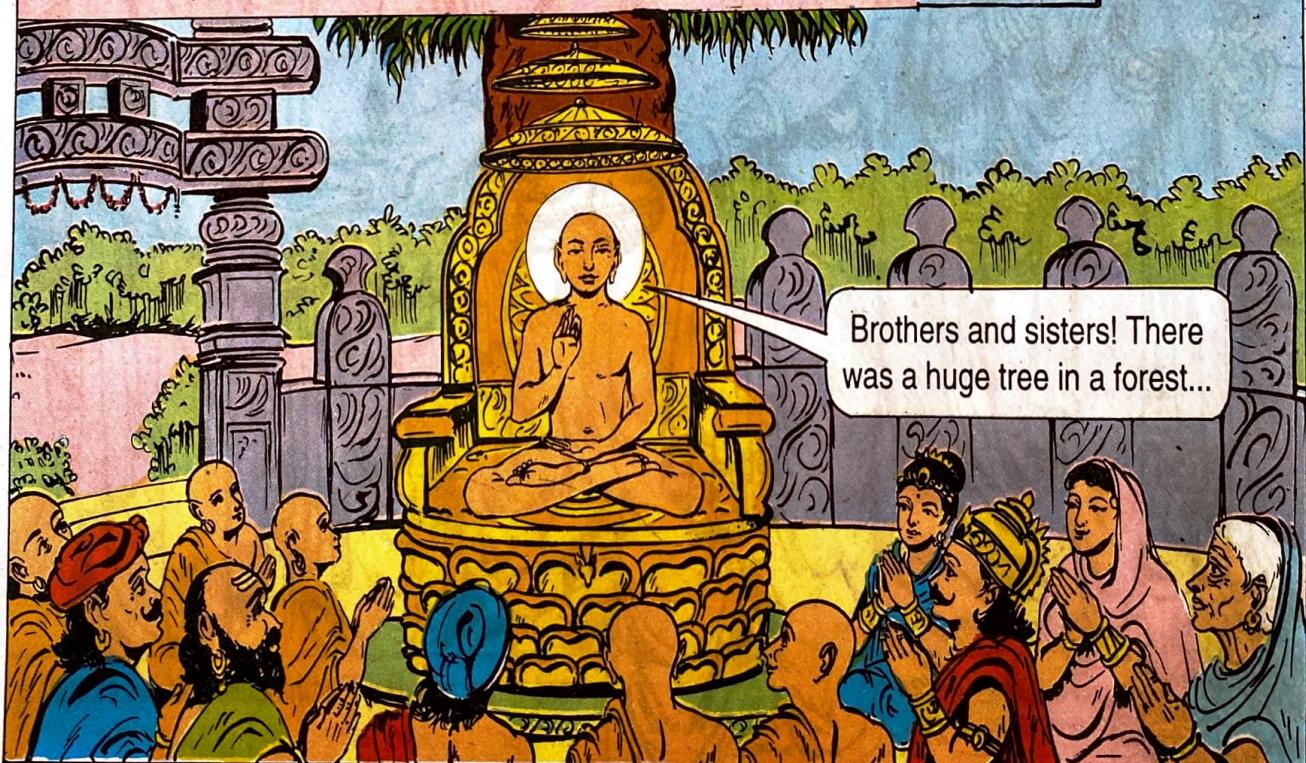


Lord Indra and Raj Purohit collected his clothes, jewellery, plucked hair etc. in a golden plate.

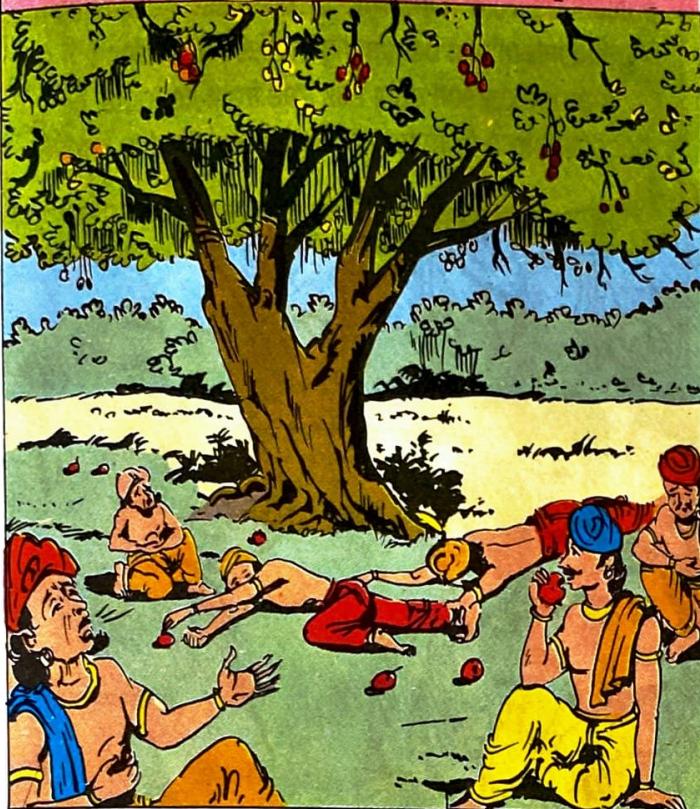
A year after accepting monkhood, Bhagwan Shantinath came again to Hastinapur and got absorbed in deep meditation below a Nandi tree in Sahastramra garden. Due to the power of his meditation divine peace spread in the air. Animals like lion, deer, cow, peacock, snake etc. forgot animosity amongst themselves and experienced peace in the presence of Bhagwan Shantinath.



On the ninth day of the brighter half of Paush month, Bhagwan attained Kevalgyan below the Nandi tree. On the same place gods created Samavasaran*. Bhagwan gave his first religious speech.

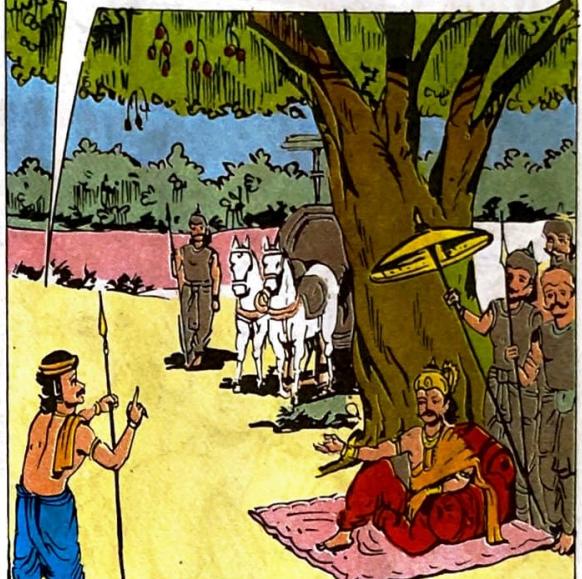


It had beautiful and sweet fruits. Tired passers-by used to take rest below it and eat its fruits also if hungry. But immediately after eating fruits they used to either become unconscious or die.

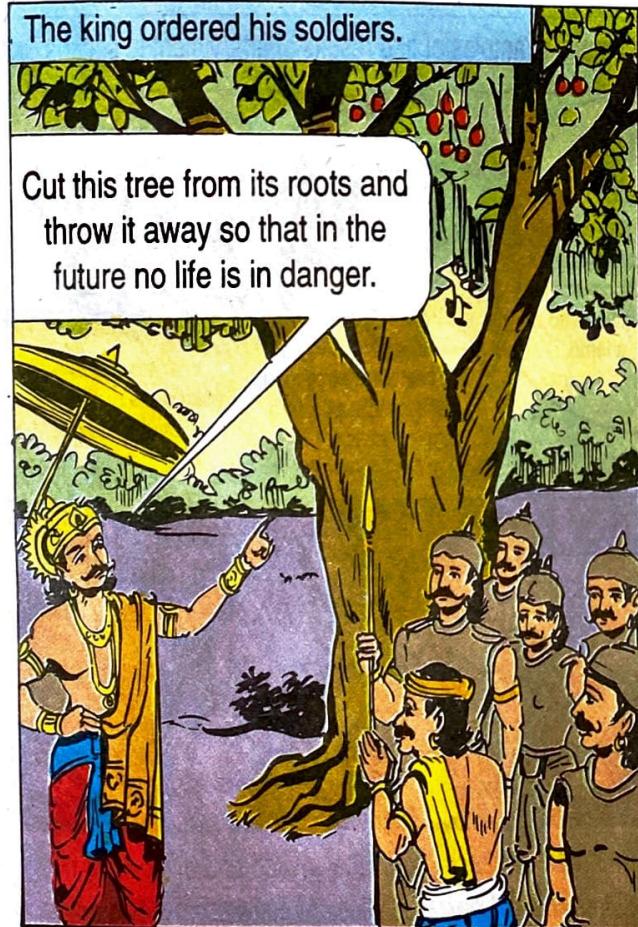


Once the king of that kingdom also rested under the same tree with his army. That time the forest's guard came and told the king—

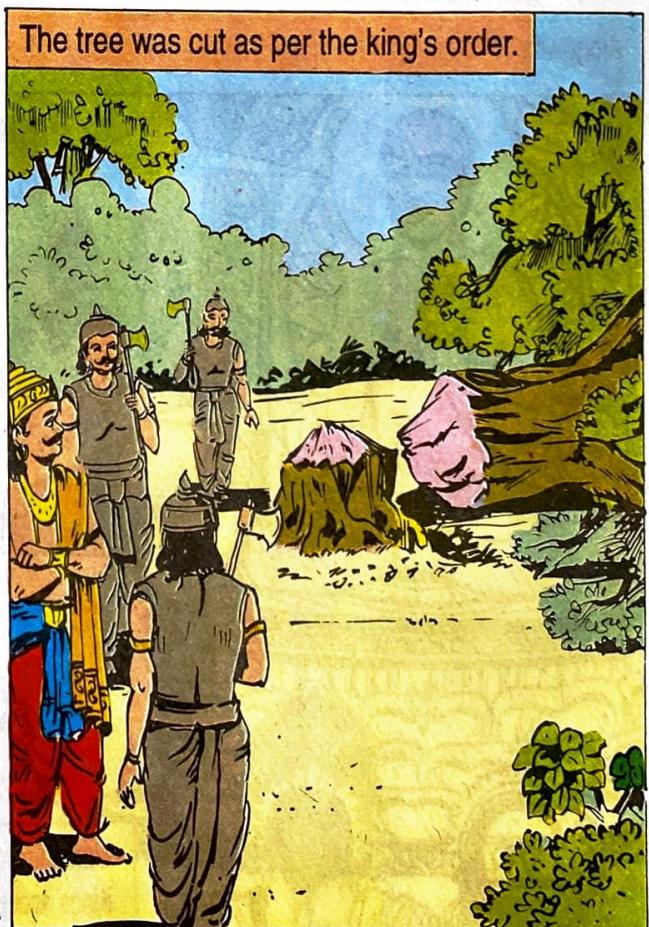
Lord! Don't sit under this poisonous tree. Whoever sits under it becomes ill and whoever eats its fruits, dies.



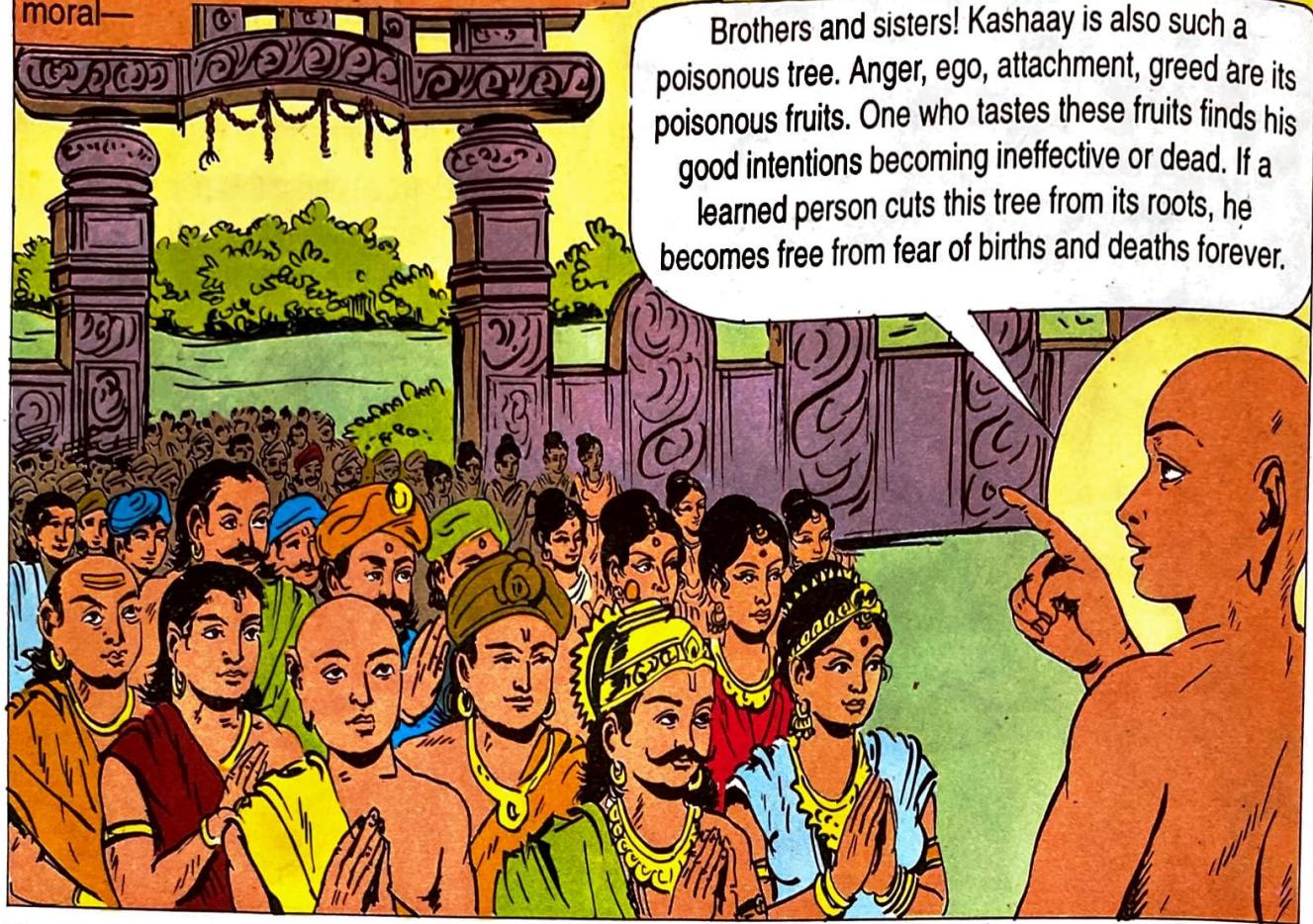
The king ordered his soldiers.



The tree was cut as per the king's order.

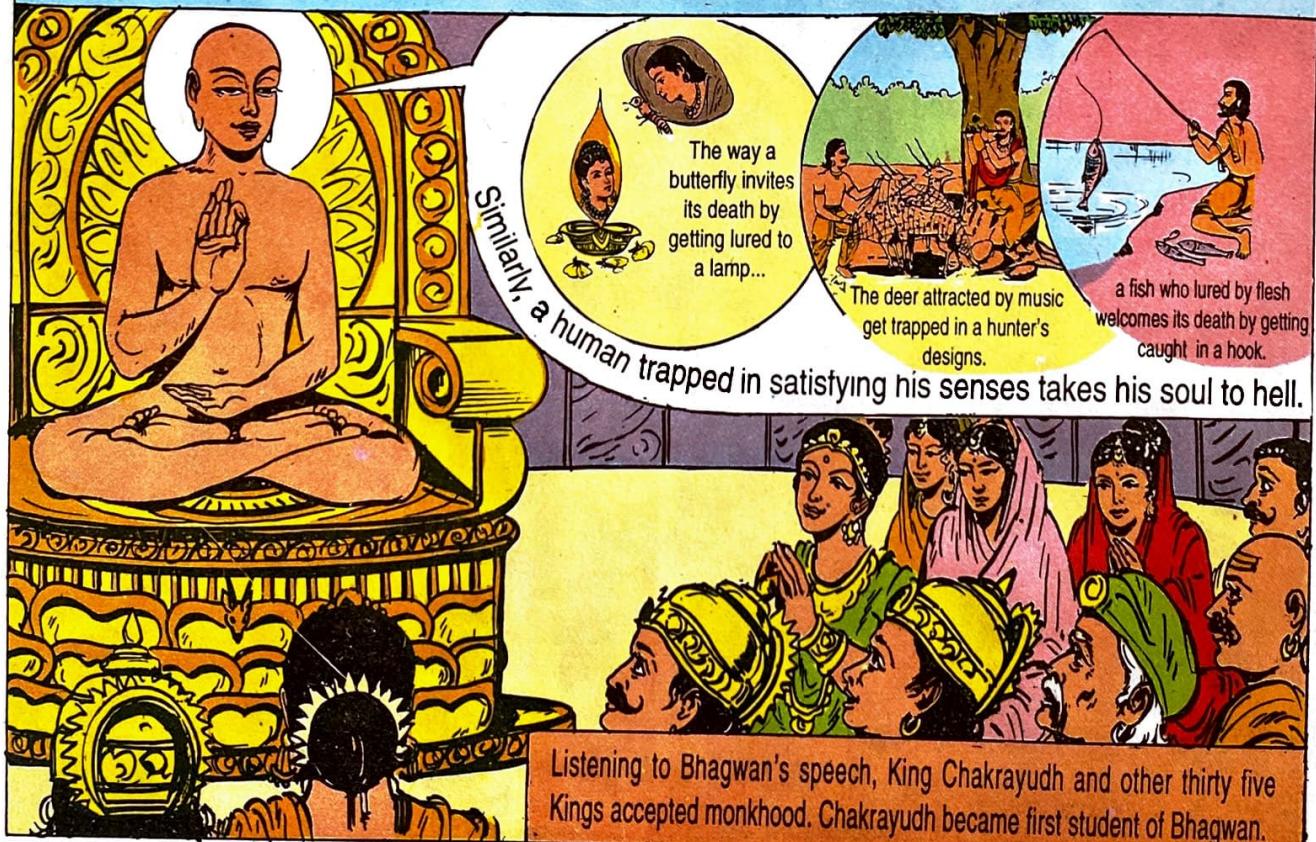


Bhagwan Shantinath explained story's moral—



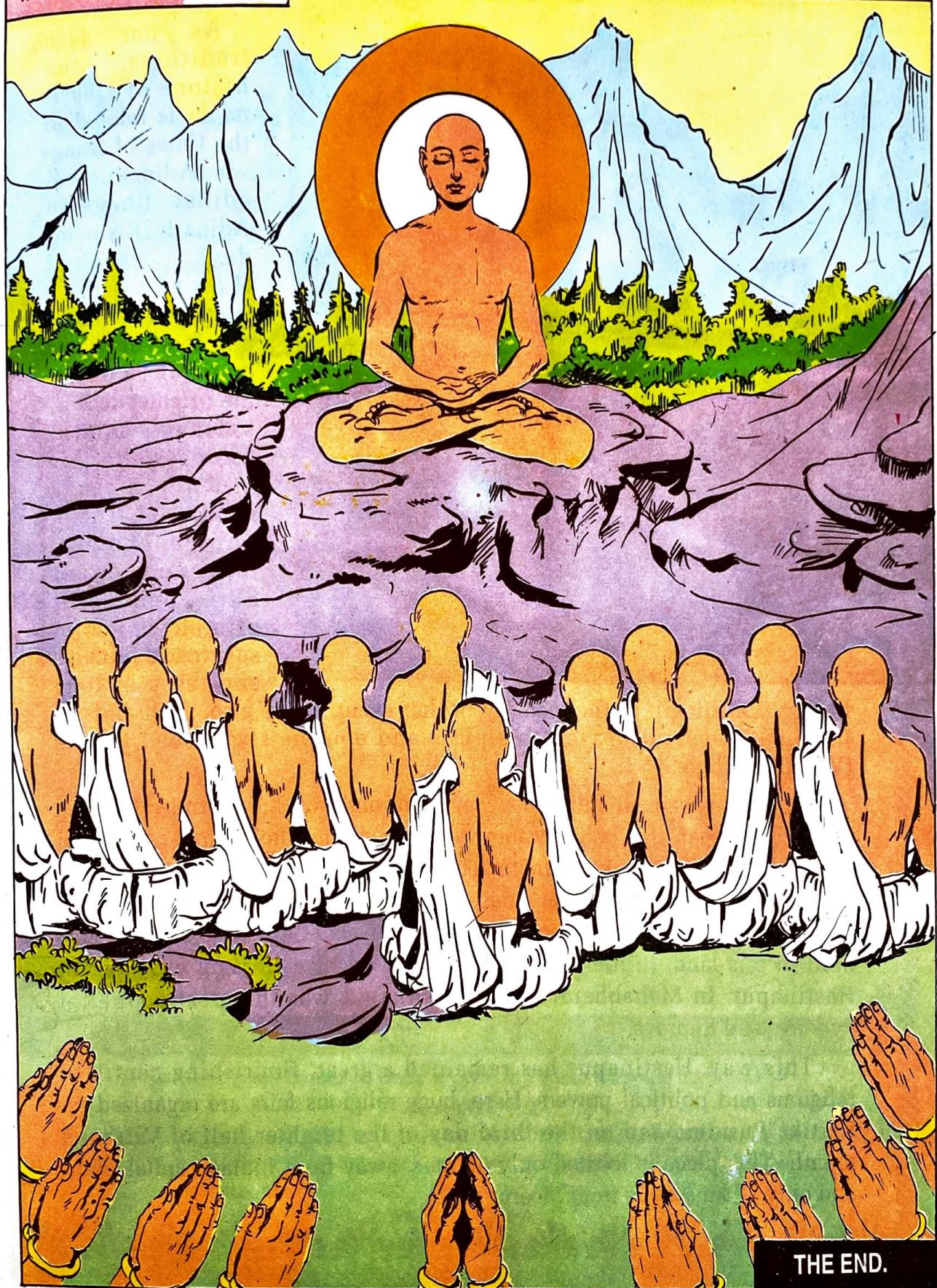
Brothers and sisters! Kashaay is also such a poisonous tree. Anger, ego, attachment, greed are its poisonous fruits. One who tastes these fruits finds his good intentions becoming ineffective or dead. If a learned person cuts this tree from its roots, he becomes free from fear of births and deaths forever.

Alongwith conquering of Kashaay, Bhagwan Shantinath showed many examples of bad results of attachment to senses.

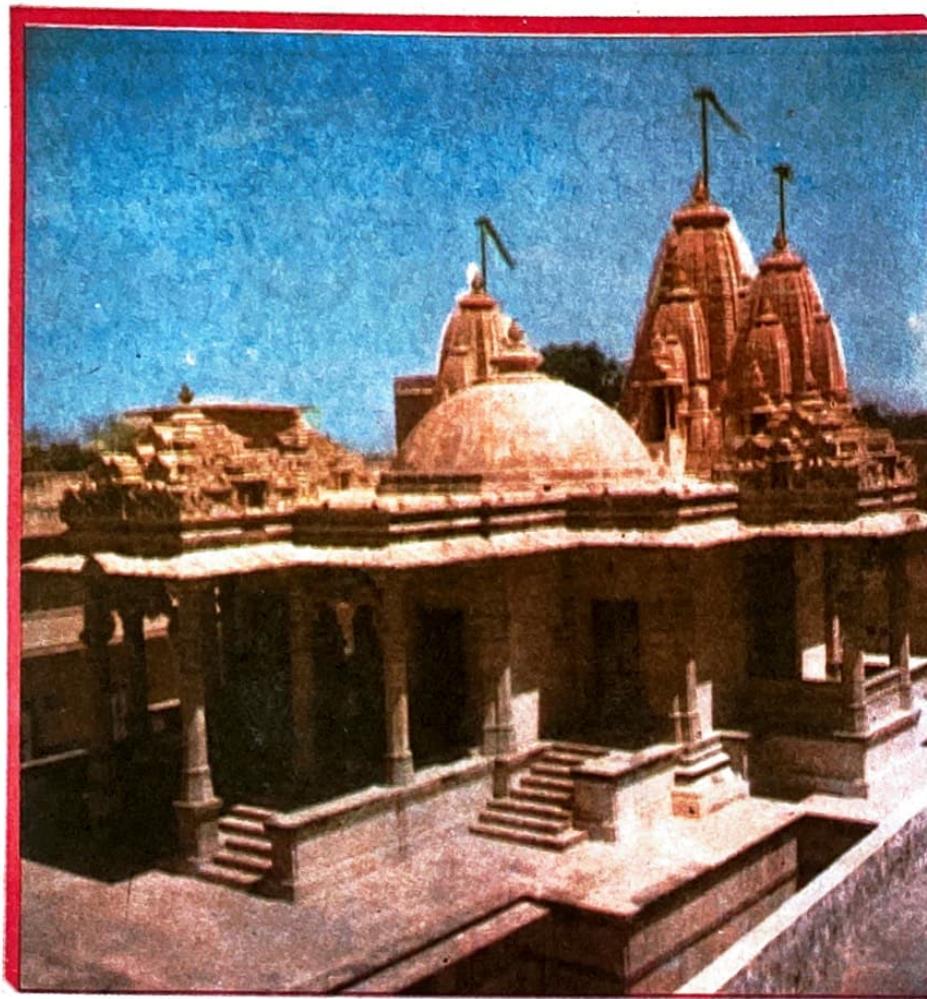


Listening to Bhagwan's speech, King Chakrayudh and other thirty five Kings accepted monkhood. Chakrayudh became first student of Bhagwan.

After becoming a Tirthankar, Bhagwan Shantinath guided people through his speech. On knowing his end coming nearer, he went to Sammedshikhar mountains with one thousand monks, observed Anshan for a month and attained Nirvana.



THE END.



As per Jain traditions, the history of Hastinapur is related to the times of Bhagwan Adinath. Yugadidev Bhagwan Adinath (Rishabhdev) reached Hastinapur journeying without any food or water on the third day of the brighter half of Vaishakh month, 400 days after his adoption of monkhood. There, Shreyanshukumar, the grandson of Shri Bahubaliji offered him sugarcane juice to end the year long

fasting (Varshitap). In the memory of that event, today also, thousands of Jains feel reverent to visit this place and end their year long fasting (Varshitap) there.

After Bhagwan Adinath, Bhagwan Shantinath was also born in the same place. After that, this land became very sacred after the births of Bhagwan Kunthunath and Bhagwan Arnath. The all 12 Kalyanakas (Chyavan, Janma, Diksha, Kevalgnan etc.) of all these Tirthankaras took place in this same holy place. In addition to that, six out of the twelve Chakravarties were also born in this land. In the times of Ramayan, Veer Parshuramji was born in Hastinapur. In Mahabharat times, Hastinapur was the great capital of Pandavs and Kauravs.

This way, Hastinapur has remained a great, flourishing centre of religious and political powers. Here, huge religious fairs are organized on Kartika Purnima and on the third day of the brighter half of Vaishakh month. This place is located only 60 kms. away from Indian capital Delhi and only 37 kms away from Meerut (U.P.).

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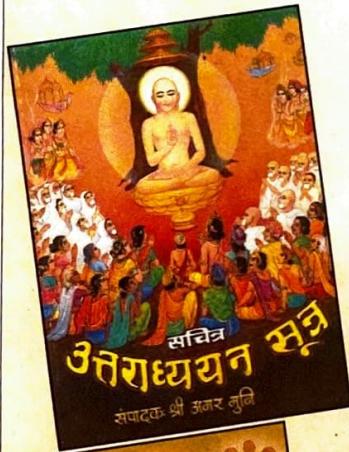
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